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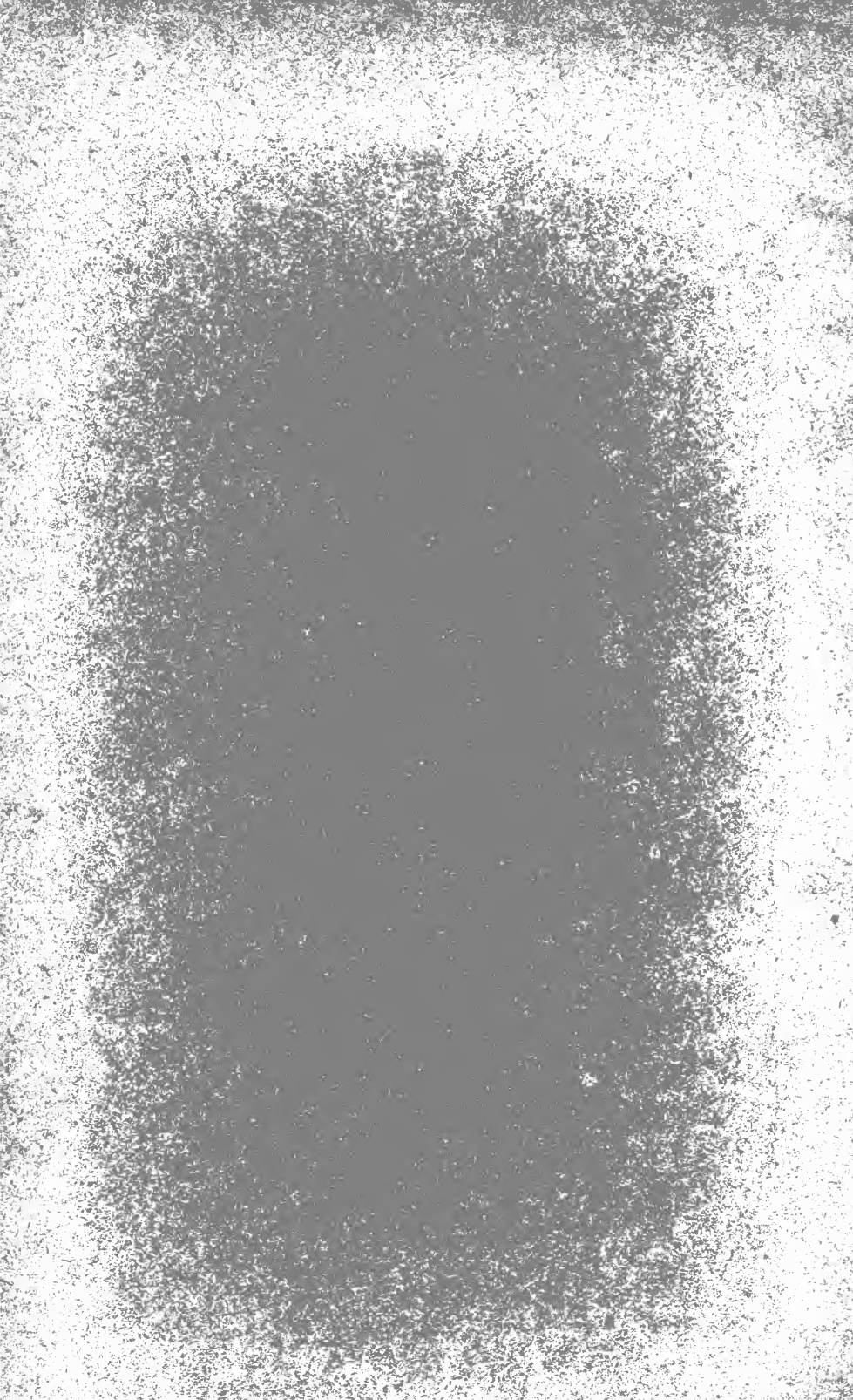
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LUCIAN

THE SYRIAN SATIRIST

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LUCIAN

THE SYRIAN SATIRIST

BY

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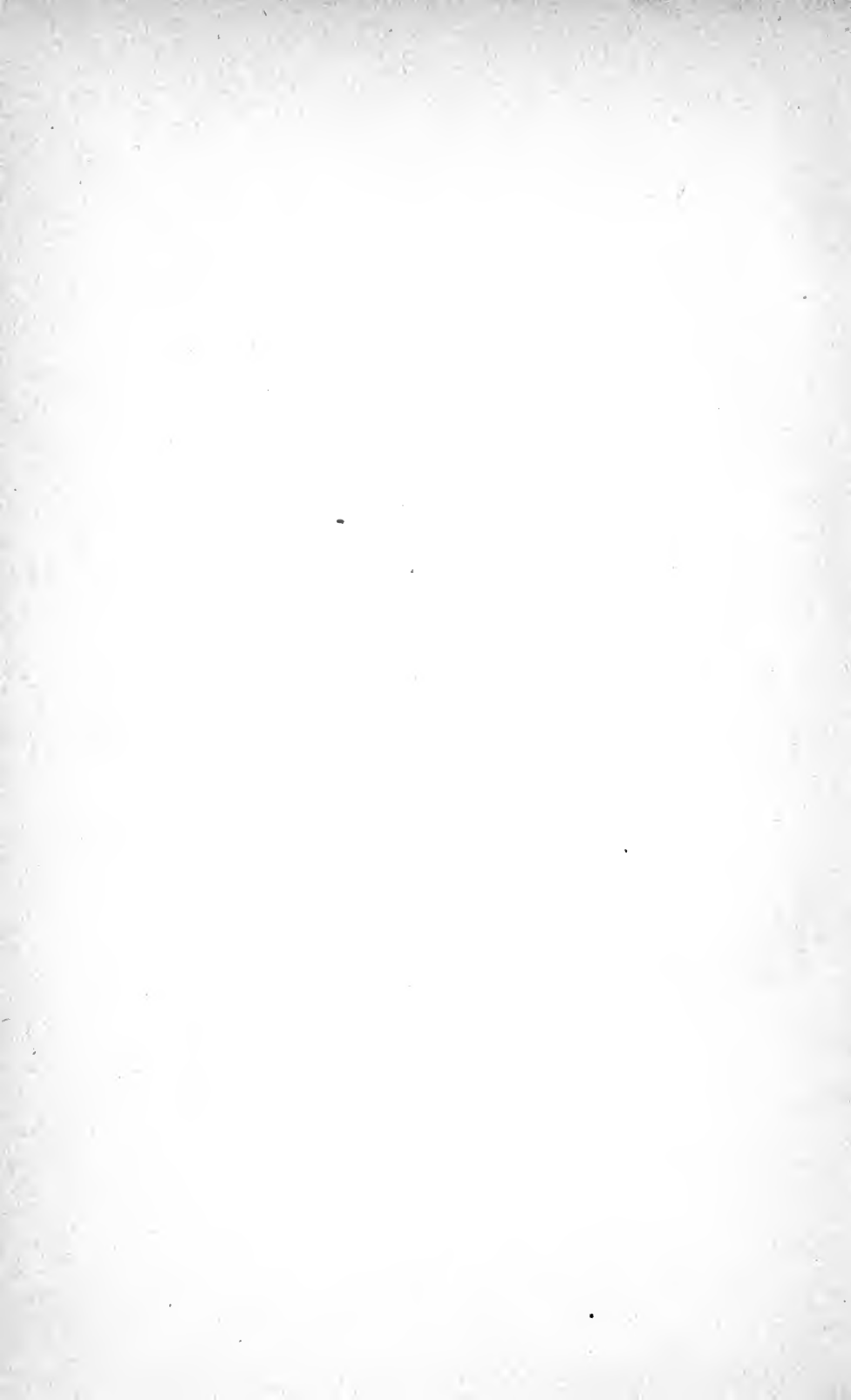
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LUCIAN

I

LIFE OF LUCIAN

LUCIAN was born at Samosata on the Euphrates between 120 and 130—say for brevity, 125 A.D. He died in Egypt, where he held a government appointment, some time after 180 A.D.

On leaving school about 140 A.D. he was bound in apprenticeship to his maternal uncle, a sculptor or maker of images; but on receiving a beating for breaking a model, he left him and returned to his parents. He was evidently not made of the stuff that artists are made of. A beating would not have driven Rafael from his canvas, Mozart from his piano, or Thorwaldsen from his marble. Yet Lucian had a strong sense of the Beautiful. There are many passages in his works which show his cultured taste for sculpture and painting, and no one could have

drawn the picture of the sleeping Endymion ('Venus and Luna,' Deor. Dial. xi. 2) or written the beautiful Idyll on the Abduction of Europa ('Zephyrus and Notus,' Dial. Mar. xv. 2, 3) without having a truly artistic imagination.¹ The course he took, however, was the natural one: a beating always puts an Asiatic to flight. Further, an artist combines in himself æsthetic and constructive faculties, and Lucian may have been wanting in the latter.

Adrift in the world, what calling was he to adopt?

Art he had abandoned; commerce he seems to have scorned;² and nothing was left but to turn rhetorician or philosopher.

The education necessary for the profession of philosophy entailed some study of dry, scientific subjects against which his purely literary nature revolted, and quiet, continuous thought of which his restless and shallow mind was incapable. On the other hand, there was a brilliancy and glitter about rhetoric that naturally attracted the admiration of an Asiatic,

¹ On this subject see Blümner's *Archæol. Studien zu Lucian*, Breslau, 1867, and Croiset's *Essai sur la vie et les œuvres de Lucian*, Paris, 1882, chapter ix.

² *Toxaris*, 4.

*Diatribe
in an army
officer while
his back*

and his oriental imagination revelled in dreams of the figure he might cut and the fortune he might reap. The education, too, requisite for a rhetorician was just the one that suited the tastes of a young Syrian, with a strong literary bias, who had been suddenly left to his own devices; for all that was needful (beyond practical instruction) was a comparatively light course of reading in oratory, history and imaginative literature, with a smattering of law. At all events, after some hesitation¹ he rejected philosophy, and in order to obtain the necessary instruction in rhetoric, he made his way into Ionia which was at that time as it were a Palace of Art and Eloquence.²

The period in which Lucian lived may be called the age of rhetoricians: there was a craze for rhetoricians:—

E'en Thulé, blessings on her! seems to say
She'll hire a rhetorician, cost what may.³

Yet perhaps at no other period of history has the noble art of rhetoric fallen to a lower depth

¹ Fancifully described in his *Somnium*.

² πάσης τῆς Ἰωνίας οἶον Μουσείου πεπολισμένης: Philostratus, *Vit. Soph.* ii. 21, 3, ed. Kayser.

³ Juvenal, xv. 112.

of degradation.¹ The most necessary quality for success, says Lucian's typical rhetorician, 'is ignorance, coupled with impudence, boldness and effrontery. Leave modesty, equity and blushes at home.'² All was hollow and artificial; the merits of the question argued were nothing; the phraseology and theatrical delivery were everything. Such subjects as the following were set for public declamations:—a man had three sons, and when he died it was found that he had divided his property into four shares, and directed that each son should have one share. To whom did the fourth share belong?³ The rhetorician's duty was to talk, to utter the longest possible string of sonorous words and elaborate phrases. 'Talk without ceasing,' says Lucian's rhetorician. 'Say at haphazard whatever occurs to you. . . . But, of all things, do not hesitate—talk on and on.'⁴ . . . If the audience are cold, grow indignant and abuse them. . . . And never omit to have a body of friends at hand to applaud you.'⁵ Such passages remind us of the parting advice given

¹ Lucian alludes to this fact in *Bis Accus.* 31.

² *Rhet. Precept.* 15.

³ Prof. J. B. Bury's *Hist. Rom. Emp.* 27 B.C. to 180 A.D., p. 573.

⁴ πλὴν ἀλλ' ἐπειγε καὶ σύνειρε καὶ μὴ σιώπα μόνον. *Rhet. Precept.* 18.

⁵ *Ib.* 15, 19, 21; perhaps the earliest mention of the *claque*.

by the eloquent Arab beggar, Aboo Zaid, to his son who followed his father's calling :—

Let alertness be thy garb, adroitness thy lamp, audacity
thine armour.

The bold will prosper, the timid fail.
Then sally forth, my son, as early as the raven,
With the vigour of a falcon, and the craftiness of a fox,

And persuade by the glozing of the tongue,
And deceive by the magic of eloquence.¹

From the absence in his works of any allusion to his teachers, and from the fact that he was poor, we may infer that Lucian was more or less self-educated. It is unnecessary to dwell upon the knowledge he displays of the Greek orators and poets (especially Homer) in almost every page of his works. Whether he had any acquaintance with Latin literature is a very obscure point. He certainly knew a little Latin, for on one occasion he was able to narrate the legend of Phaethon to boatmen who were rowing him up the Tiber.² The supposition that a man

¹ *Makamat of Al Hariri of Busra*, translated by Preston, pp. 436, 438.

² Καὶ γὰρ τὸν μῦθον διηγούμενη αὐτοῖς, Φαίθοντα γενέσθαι Ἡλίου παῖδα κ. τ. λ., *De Electro*, 2. He also refers to his slight knowledge of Latin, *De Lapsu*, 13.

of quick apprehension and thoroughly literary tastes, who possessed any knowledge of Latin at all, should have spent years in Italy and Gaul without making some attempt to acquaint himself with the great Latin writers, cannot be entertained for a moment. Even if his knowledge of Latin was very slight, his Roman literary friends must surely have explained to him from time to time great passages of the Latin poets, in much the same way that Crabb Robinson expounded Byron's 'Vision of Judgment' to the aged Goethe.¹ Why, then, it may be asked, has he never directly referred to them? First, probably, because he disliked Rome and the Romans.² He identified himself with the Greeks, and doubtless shared in their jealousy of their masters. Secondly, in writing he had his eye chiefly upon his Greek, not his Latin, readers. The former had no difficulty in appreciating his Greek quotations, but Latin quotations would have been unintelligible to most of them. But though he never mentions Latin writers by name, he seems to me to have more than once silently appropriated thoughts and phrases from Roman authors, just as he

¹ *Diary, etc.*, ii. 436.

² *Nigrinus* and *De Merced. Conduct.*, passim.

frequently borrows from Greek poets without acknowledging his debt.¹

Lucian was well read in the Greek historians, especially Herodotus; but he regarded history exclusively from the literary point of view. Of the concatenation of events and the evolution of society he had no notion. It would be absurd to censure him for not seeing history as Vico, Montesquieu or Buckle saw it; but he failed to rise to the point of view of Herodotus or Thucydides, who lived centuries before him. He was unable to divest himself of the modes of thought of his race. Asia has produced many good chroniclers, but no great historian.

In his tract 'How History should be written,' he explains his views upon the subject pleasantly and at considerable length. The historian, he says, should possess political intelligence² (a phrase he does not explain), the power of expressing himself, and an open mind. The style should be clear, simple, &c. As to composition, the truth of the various statements should be established first; the facts should then be

¹ The question of Lucian's knowledge of Latin is raised in Rigault's *Luc. Samosat. quæ fuerit, etc.*, Paris, 1856, p. 79 ff. C. F. Ranke, overlooking *De Electrò*, 2, says it has not been proved that Lucian knew Latin; *Pollux et Lucianus*, p. 28. The question is discussed in the Appendix of this book.

² Σύνεσις πολιτική: *Quom. Hist. Conscrib.* 34.

marshalled in order; and finally they should be welded together into a history. Throughout the whole tract there is nothing to show that he had any notion of the causation in history which Thucydides certainly recognised.¹ He admits that Thucydides was truthful,² but he does not seem to have realised that 'there is hardly a problem in the science of government which the statesman will not find, if not solved, at any rate handled, in the pages of the universal master.'³

While Lucian is captivated by the beauty of Herodotus' style and the charm of his narrative, and can ridicule his credulity and blunders,⁴ he is silent about the excellent judgment Herodotus frequently shows, notwithstanding his imperfect information; he ignores his boundless curiosity, a quality absolutely necessary to a historian; and he is blind to his perception of the concatenation of events.

Lucian failed to master the first principles of geometry and science as completely as he failed

¹ Γινόμενα μὲν καὶ αἰεὶ ἐσόμενα ἕως ἂν ἡ αὐτὴ φύσις ἀνθρώπων ᾖ, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἡσυχαιτέρα καὶ τοῖς εἶδεσι διηλλαγμένα, ὡς ἂν ἕκασται ἀμεταβολαὶ τῶν ξυτυχιῶν ἐφιστῶνται : iii. 82.

² *Quom. Hist. Conscrib.* 39, 42.

³ 'The Historians of Athens' (in *Hist. Essays*), by E. A. Freeman, 95.

⁴ He consigns Herodotus to Tartarus for lying: *Vcr. Hist.* ii. 31.

to grasp the idea of law in history. He jeers at the points without parts and lines without breadth of geometry ;¹ ridicules the belief that the sun is a flaming mass ; and derides the attempt to measure the distances of the heavenly bodies. 'Fellows,' he says, 'who don't know the number of miles between Athens and Megara can tell you the number of yards between the sun and moon, the height of the atmosphere, the depth of the sea, &c.'² Such jests might pass unnoticed had they been thrown off in some outlandish place during a period of gross ignorance. But they were written in Greece by a man who lived 250 years after Hipparchus, and who was a contemporary of Claudius Ptolemæus whose work on astronomy, the 'Great Syntaxis,' 'contains the germs of most of the methods in use at the present day.'³

At twenty-five years of age⁴ (about 150 A.D.), he began to practise as a rhetorician in Ionia

¹ *Hermot.* 74. One is reminded of the sham tutor in Voltaire's *Jeannot et Colin*: 'de toutes les sciences la plus absurde, à mon avis, et celle qui est la plus capable d'étouffer toute espèce de génie : c'est la géométrie. Celle science ridicule a pour objet des surfaces, des lignes, et des points, qui n'existent pas dans la nature.' Lucian was merely stating the arguments of the Sceptics.

² *Icaromen.* 6, 7.

³ *Encyclop. Brit.* 9th ed., art. 'Astronomy.'

⁴ He was forty when he gave up rhetoric (*Hermot.* 13, *Bis Accus.* 32), in which profession he says he foolishly wasted fifteen years (*Hermot.* 24).

and Greece, and shortly afterwards went to Rome to see an oculist about his eyes. He there met Nigrinus, the academician, who urged him to discard rhetoric and study philosophy. So moving was the eloquence of the philosopher that Lucian's head swam round; his voice failed, his tongue refused to move when he wished to speak; he burst into a perspiration,¹ and then burst into tears.² Miss Burney's choicest heroines never had a more trying experience. And Philosophy won him? By no means. With all the good will in the world, Lucian could never have become a true philosopher; for he was wanting in the steadiness of purpose, the calmness of judgment, the logical consistency and the intellectual grasp that are necessary to make one. On the morrow, it may be, he resumed his profession, went to North Italy in pursuit of business, and finally passed into Gaul.³ Here he appears to have obtained some public appointment⁴ and to have accumulated money.

Being now beyond the reach of want, he took a very natural step: he had left his native town a penniless boy, and he now returned home to present himself to his friends as a public func-

¹ ἰδρῶτι κατερρέομην: *Nigr.* 4.

² τέλος ἐδάκρυον ἀπορούμενος: *ib.*

³ *Bis Accus.* 27.

⁴ *Apologia*, 15.

Natural
Awful

tionary and a well-known rhetorician and pleader. He was in Ionia and Syria during the first years of the reign of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, and by an ingenious comparison of the two tracts, 'Imagines' and 'Pro Imaginibus,' M. Croiset draws the conclusion that Lucian saw the Emperor Lucius Verus in Antioch in 162-3 A.D.¹ He left Antioch probably in 164 A.D. to return to Greece, taking with him his father and family. On the way he stopped at Abonotichos in order to visit Alexander, the magician. He sailed finally for Greece from the Troad, in company with Peregrinus, the Cynic. In the end of 164, or beginning of 165, he was at Corinth; and in the latter year he visited the Olympic Games during which Peregrinus leaped into the flames and perished.

When Lucian was forty years of age, that is, very probably, in this year 165, the most important event of his life took place; for to it we owe all his best works. He abjured rhetoric and, after a short hesitation, became a satirist. Let us endeavour to trace the causes of this radical change.

That a man who was opposed (or thought he

¹ *Annuaire de l'Association pour l'encouragmt. des études grecques*, 1879.

was opposed) to imposition and sham should have followed for fifteen years such a profession as rhetoric was then, must have been owing to some irresistible necessity; and the necessity, we may feel sure, was poverty. This obstacle to his quitting rhetoric, however, was removed by his financial success in Gaul. But the habits contracted during a number of years are not lightly cast off, and Lucian might possibly have remained a rhetorician in name to the end had not other influences been at work. Of the existence of two such influences there can be very little doubt.

First, he may have made friends, but he must certainly have made enemies among the rhetoricians. Human nature was much the same then as it is now, and no man endures ridicule without some feeling of resentment. Can we doubt that Lucian laughed in the faces of the weaker brethren in court and at declamations? He did so doubtless, and, what was worse, he held them up to public scorn in his writings. He took his amusement and paid the inevitable price: he was detested by all the dullards and hypocrites—and they were many—in his profession. They hated him not the less because he was a Syrian, a foreign upstart;

they hated him all the more because not one of them could cope with him in wit, or vie with him in style. Their enmity naturally made him not unwilling to leave them and rhetoric for ever, when a convenient opportunity occurred.

Secondly, about this time his acquaintance with Demonax, whom he apparently had long known,¹ became very intimate; and it is easy to understand how strongly intercourse with the agreeable and genial philosopher drew the fickle Syrian from rhetoric and attracted him towards philosophy.

The concurrent action of these influences was quite strong enough to alter the course of a man with a stabler character than Lucian, and we learn without surprise that he cut himself adrift from rhetoric in 165: a step which necessitated his deciding, for the second time in his life, what calling he should adopt.

He was not born a poet, and history was beyond the grasp of one who failed to perceive, even dimly, the existence of some determinate order in the march of human affairs. Physical science was quite unsuitable for a man of forty who was ignorant of the elements of mathematics and physics. That the majority of

¹ *Demon. Vit. 1.*

educated persons in his time had no notion of natural law, is shown by such works as Ælian's 'History of Animals'¹ and some of Plutarch's essays. Lucian did not rise above the rest. He had no conception of invariable law, and he rejected as incredible whatever transcended his personal experience.

Metaphysic, or even Psychology, was out of the question. A man ignorant of the simplest laws of matter was not likely to master the subtler laws of mind. Unaware of the reign of law among the phenomena of nature, he of course had no belief in a Lawgiver hidden behind phenomena. He would probably have been moved to laughter by the words of the Persian poet:—

. . . . the world is ruled by a hidden Power.

The hand is hidden, yet we see the pen writing ;
 The horse is galloping, yet the rider is hidden from view ;
 The arrow speeds forth, yet the bow is unseen ;
 Souls are seen : the Soul of Souls (God) is hidden.²

Lucian did not apply his mind to such laborious and unsuitable studies as history, science or philosophy, but betook himself to the lighter and more congenial task of heaping

¹ Quoted in Croiset's *Essai sur . . . Lucien*, p. 178.

² *Masnavi* of Jalalu'd Din Rumi, trans. by Whinfield, p. 78.

ridicule upon those who did. Yet he believed that he had become a philosopher.¹ He never became one: he was rhetorician and sophist to the end of his days. It is true he coquetted with philosophy,² as he had done before;³ but the courtship was short and the breach was final.

We can only surmise that his headquarters were at Athens from this time forward until he sailed to take up his appointment in Egypt, where he died.

¹ ἡρξάμην φιλοσοφείν κ. τ. λ., *Hermot.* 13.

² *Bis Accus.* 32; *De Salt.* 3.

³ *Nigr.* 4, 35.

II

CLASSIFICATION OF LUCIAN'S WORKS

EIGHTY-THREE works have been attributed to Lucian. Some of them are most probably spurious, but the critics are not agreed about the exact number. Bekker rejects twenty-eight, Sommerbrodt twenty-two, Croiset thirteen, &c. The question does not concern us here, as none of the works generally disputed are referred to.

The most convenient classification of Lucian's works is a division of them into some such groups as those proposed by M. Croiset, and this is a delicate and difficult undertaking. His groups are given below, but minor works and those generally allowed to be spurious are omitted.

1

Under the direct influence of Rhetoric

Nigrinus (shortly after 150 A.D.).

Imagines (162-3).

Quomodo Historia Conscribenda (early in 165).



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2

Transition Period (from Rhetoric to Satire)

De Saltatione (middle of 165).
Anacharsis.
Toxaris.

3

On abandoning Rhetoric

Hermotimus (end of 165).
Philopseudes.
Convivium.

4

Under the influence of Menippus, the Cynic

Necyomantia.
Dialogi Mortuorum.
Icaromenippus.
Jupiter Confutatus.
Dialogi Deorum and Dialogi Marini.
Veræ Historiæ.

5

Under the influence of the Old Comedy

| | | |
|-----------|-------------------|----------------|
| Tyrannus. | Jupiter Tragœdus. | Piscator. |
| Gallus. | Concilium Deorum. | Bis Accusatus. |
| Timon. | Prometheus. | Peregrinus. |
| Charon. | Auctio Vitarum. | |

6

Miscellaneous

Rhetorum Præceptor.
De Mercede Conductis.
Demonax (177, Bolderman¹).
Alexander (after 180).

¹ *Studia Luciana*, p. 15.

The works in which Lucian is seen at his worst, in the humble opinion of the present writer, are his lampoons 'Alexander,' 'Peregrinus' and 'Adversus indoctum et libros multos eminentem.' Owing to the nature of the subject, there was little scope in any one of the three for his imagination and humour, while there was ample room for all his weakest qualities. 'Hermitimus' is his most important philosophical (or anti-philosophical) pamphlet, and it is generally agreed that his greatest religious (or anti-religious) work is 'Jupiter Tragædus.' Perhaps 'Charon sive Contemplantes,' written evidently when he was at the height of his powers, is the composition in which he delivers his views on the destiny of man in his finest and sombrest manner. But the work in which his two best gifts, imagination and humour, are shown to the greatest advantage is assuredly the 'Veræ Historiæ,' a masterpiece which has never been excelled. Great writers have not scrupled to cull flowers from it; yet Lucian holds his own, in imagination and humour, with Rabelais, Swift and Voltaire.

III

THE LIMITS OF SATIRE

SATIRE is the expression either of amusement at folly or of disgust at vice. But this expression of ridicule or scorn is subject to two conditions : first, it must be conveyed in a literary form ; and secondly, when aimed at the unseemly it must possess some tincture of wit or humour. The grounds for these conditions are obvious. If literary form be absent, the expression of our contempt or derision degenerates into a sneer or a gibe. If humour and wit be wholly wanting in attacks upon vice, satire sinks into a sermon or invective. This meaning of the word *satire* is narrower than Juvenal's :

Whatever passions have the soul possest,
 Whatever wild desires inflamed the breast,
 Joy, Sorrow, Fear, Love, Hatred, Transport, Rage,
 Shall form the motley subject of my page.¹

¹ Quidquid agunt homines, votum, timor, ira, voluptas,
 Gaudia, discursus, nostri est farrago libelli : i. 185 (Gifford).

On the other hand, it is somewhat broader than Pope's :

Satire's my weapon, but I'm too discreet
To run amuck and tilt at all I meet ;
I only wear it in a land of Hectors,
Thieves, Supercargoes, Sharpers and Directors ;¹

It approaches more nearly to that given in an 'Essay on Satire' (wrongly, I believe) attributed to Dryden, where it is said to be the province of satire

To tell men truly of their foulest faults,²
To laugh at their vain deeds and vainer thoughts.

The meaning of the word *satire* given above is sufficient for our present purpose, since it includes writers so widely different as Langland (the author of 'Piers the Ploughman') and Voltaire, Persius and Rabelais, Horace and Swift.

Satire is applicable to things which invite our ridicule or move our contempt ; but to such things only is it applicable. To apply it to other subjects is to abuse it—and it has been too often abused. The temptations to do so are confessedly great. First, the unanswerable

¹ 'Imitations of Horace,' *Sat.* ii. 1, 69.

² The old word *faute* only recovered its hereditary *l* in the sixteenth century, and its traditional sound long survived, as here and in Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*.

argument of ridicule presents an easy short cut to conclusions to which the ordinary methods of reasoning afford no approach—practically, to any conclusions we please. Secondly, it takes the popular ear. ‘The multitude hear nothing with so much good will as satire and sarcasm,’ says Diogenes in Lucian’s ‘Piscator,’ 25, ‘especially when bestowed upon objects the most respectable in general estimation.’¹

It is unnecessary to catalogue here the many matters to which satire is inapplicable; but one or two must be mentioned, because they are closely connected with the present subject. Foremost among them are the various beliefs which men hold, or have held, concerning the existence of a Deity, or Deities, and concerning death and what lies beyond the grave. Men’s beliefs, present or past, upon these matters may excite awe or wonder, sorrow or pity, but never contempt or ridicule in either reverent or generous minds.² They do not belong to the

¹ E’en the whole world, blockheads and men of letters,
Enjoy a cannonade against their betters.

PETER PINDAR.

² His ibi me rebus quædam divina voluptas
Percipit atque horror

LUCRETIVS, *de N. R.* iii. 28.

province of satire, and to use it against them is an artistic crime.

'Religion, they tell us, ought not to be ridiculed, and they tell us truth; yet surely the corruptions in it may,' writes Swift.¹ If the limits of satire have been correctly laid down, she has an undoubted right to lash those corruptions in religion which move our scorn or our laughter. She has a right to express her contempt for the amours of the Greek and Hindoo gods, her derision at the sale of Indulgences, her wrathful scorn at the Inquisition, her merriment at the dancing Darwayshes; but this falls very far short of ridiculing the belief in a Deity, in the freedom of the will, and in the immortality of the soul.

Lucian was unaffected by these considerations and ridiculed with impartiality the gods on Olympus and the ghosts in the Shades, the king upon his throne and the dying philosopher upon his pallet in prison.² He was uninfluenced by them because they only appeal to men animated by some spark of generosity and reverence. He shows no generosity, and the only reverence he ever displayed was for his

¹ 'Author's Apology,' prefixed to the *Tale of a Tub*.

² *Dialog. Mort.* 21.

own interests. The solitary institution that
escaped his sarcasm was the Roman Govern-
ment.¹ He died a Roman official.

¹ Open satire would of course have been out of the question ; but Lucian, had he chosen, was just as capable of writing covert satire as were Persius, Juvenal and Tacitus.

IV

LUCIAN'S PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

LUCIAN'S chief pamphlet on philosophy, 'Hermotimus,' is a rhetorical attempt to prove that all philosophy is impossible—that (as Pascal puts it) 'se moquer de la philosophie, c'est vraiment philosopher.' The general conclusion is essentially sceptical, and were it not for a passage in which he *seems* to speak of virtue as good, we might be tempted to conclude that he had enrolled himself among the Pyrrhonians or New Academicians, the former of whom he characteristically laughs to scorn in the 'Auctio Vitarum,' 27; the latter in 'Icaromenippus,' 25, and the 'Veræ Historiæ,' ii. 18. He never joined any school; and, apparently, lest any doubt should remain about his meaning in 'Hermotimus,' he arraigns the sects in 'Necyomantia' in a way that cannot be misunderstood. Menippus there says that he found them all ignorant and perplexed, living lives that were in

open contradiction to their teaching. He continues—‘one of them (the Epicurean) advised me to pursue pleasure at all hazards, for in pleasure lay true happiness. Another (the Cynic) perpetually dinned into my ears the notorious verses of Hesiod about virtue and exertion and the ascent of the Hill of Virtue,¹ and exhorted me to subdue the flesh. “Be squalid and foul in your person,” he said, “and offensive and abusive in your language.” A third (the Stoic) admonished me to contemn riches, while a fourth (the Peripatetic) affirmed wealth to be good in itself.’² The question at once presents itself, how came Lucian to reject all existing systems of philosophy? He had, certainly, at one time or another, made advances to, or entered into negotiations with, the leading Schools. His unwavering aversion to the

¹ Τὴν μὲν τοι κακότητα καὶ Ἰλαδὸν ἔστιν εἰλεῖσθαι
 ‘Ρηϊδίως· λείη μὲν ὁδὸς, μάλα δ’ ἐγγύθι ναίει.
 Τῆς δ’ ἀρετῆς ἰδρῶτα θεοὶ προπάρουθεν ἔθηκαν
 ‘Αθάνατοι· μακρὸς δὲ καὶ ὄρθιος οἶμον εἰς αὐτήν
 Καὶ τρηχὺς τοπρῶτον· ἐπήν δ’ εἰς ἄκρον ἴκηται,
 ‘Ρηϊδίη δὴ ἔπειτα πέλει, χαλεπή περ εὐῶσα.

(Vice is not hard to reach: the road thereunto is level and near at hand. But, by the decree of the immortal gods, the road to Virtue is a toilsome and a weary one. Long and steep and rugged is the path—at first; but once the summit of the Hill has been reached, then truly that becomes easy which was difficult before.) *Works and Days*, 287 *et seq.*

² *Necyoman*. 4.

noblest of them all, Stoicism, shows at least that he had made himself acquainted with its principal doctrines. He had sought instruction from the Pyrrhonians and New Academicians;¹ he had entered into close relations with the Cynics;² and in later life he seems to have inclined towards the Epicureans.³ He had, partially at least, carried out the very plan which he assured the timid Hermotimus was impossible—life was too short for it;⁴ he had studied (superficially no doubt⁵) the tenets of the various sects and rejected them all. Why did he reject them? M. Croiset, if I gather his meaning correctly, seems to think Lucian's rejection of the sects was chiefly due to his love of independence;⁶ but it is not clear where sufficient evidence is to be found of his possessing so strong a love of independence as to hinder him

¹ Ἐς δὲ τὴν Ἀκαδημειαν ἢ εἰς τὸ Λύκειον ἐλθόντα, κ. τ. λ. *Bis Accus.* 32.

² It is sufficient to mention his admiration for Menippus and his friendship with Demonax.

³ *Alexander*, 25, 45, 47, 61.

⁴ 48-49. Hermotimus reminds one of the unhappy 'young man' so familiar in the sermons of the ministers of the Kirk, created only to be annihilated.

⁵ 'Im Allgemeinen muss man sehr zweifeln, ob Lucian die wissenschaftlichen System der älteren griechischen Philosophen überhaupt gründlich gekannt habe.' Passow's *Lucian und die Geschichte*, Meiningen, 1854, p. 20.

⁶ *Essai sur Lucien*, 110.

from accepting *some* system of thought. The question is not to be disposed of so simply.

Lucian seems to have been constitutionally incapable of distinguishing between a gross belief in, say, augury or Charon's obolus and the indefinable feeling that

The awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats, though unseen, among us . . .¹

He belonged, like Bunyan's 'Man with the Muckrake,' to a class of men who 'could look no way but downwards':—

. . . curvæ in terras animæ et cœlestium inanes.²

Now Lucian happened to be born at a period when superstition was wide-spread and miracles were fashionable. A reaction had taken place and philosophy never was more religious than in the second century A.D.³ The leading men of the age were devout. The Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, thought life would not be worth living without gods;⁴ Fronto prayed daily for the recovery of the Empress Faustina when she was ill; Pliny the Younger built two temples; Dion

¹ Shelley's *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*.

² Persius, ii. 61.

³ Aubé's *Hist. des Perséc. de l'Eglise*, ii. 111.

⁴ *Thoughts of Emp. Mar. Aur.* ii. 11.

Chrysostom, Plutarch and Epictetus were theists; and all of them believed firmly in the intervention of the gods in human affairs. The moralists and popular preachers (generally Cynics) were either neutral or regarded such matters with contemptuous indifference, and the Epicureans alone were actively hostile to the religious reaction. When Lucian entered into life, therefore, he found himself in opposition to the great majority of the philosophers.

Matters were aggravated by his irrepressible sarcasm and unamiable disposition. The pamphlet 'Adversus indoctum, &c.' is sufficient evidence of his rancorous anger. Would an amiable man have bitten the mountebank Alexander, when he extended his hand to be kissed? ¹ A kind-hearted man would have held in abhorrence the odious Menippus, ² for whom Lucian professes the greatest admiration. Could a good-natured man have written 'Necyomantia' or 'Tyrannus'—to mention two works only? We may take it for certain that Lucian could not have remained long in contact with any

¹ ἐγὼ δὲ προσφύς ὡς φιλήσων δῆγματι χρηστῷ πάνυ μικροῦ δεῖν χολὴν αὐτῷ τὴν χεῖρα ἐποίησα: *Alex.* 55.

² ἐπεισήγαγέ μοι φοβερόν τινα ὡς ἀληθῶς κύνα καὶ τὸ δῆγμα λαθραῖον, ὄσφρα καὶ γελῶν ἅμα ἔδακνε: *Bis Accus.* 33.

school without being at open war with some of its members, and this would not tend to cement the bonds of amity between him and the rest.

The foregoing considerations afford a simple and sufficient explanation of the fact that, throughout his life, Lucian played the part of a philosophical *condottiere*. But there was another circumstance that tended to produce the same result. Lucian's was a mind which comprehended readily a single principle, but was unable to grasp, or experienced great difficulty in grasping, a body of principles connected together in a system. M. Croiset puts the matter very clearly :—' il est vivement frappé des détails, mais il voit peu les ensembles. . . . En littérature, en religion, en philosophie, il en sera de même ; partout des observations excellentes, mais nulle synthèse.'¹ This mental defect obviously tended to repel him from all possible systems, metaphysical, moral and religious.

If all systems were unacceptable to Lucian, why did he make advances to certain of them? It was not likely to have been in pursuit of Truth ; for the errors which disfigured the various systems, not the truths which adorned

¹ Croiset, *Essai sur . . . Lucien*, 101. The statements in the text should not be pushed too far.

them, were ever his quarry. His object, probably, was at once practical and prosaic. He may have amused himself from time to time in enquiring into the doctrines of the Schools, in order to discover their weak points and thus supply himself with materials for satire.

Satire, Pope tells us,

. . . mends with Morals what it hurts with Wit.¹

It would be difficult to mend anything with Lucian's morality, for what he has left us is almost entirely negative; and it only amounts, in substance, to the denunciation of three or four vices and passions—tyranny, avarice, pride, and suchlike—which had formed the stock-in-trade of moralists ages before he was born.

His rules for the conduct of life may be summed up in a few lines. He admonishes us 'to live like others.'² If we contrast this precept with that of his Emperor, Marcus Aurelius:—'live as if every day were thy last,'³ we clearly perceive how far superior was the doctrine of the Stoic to that of the Sceptic. It is true that in perhaps the only passage in all

¹ *Imitations of Horace*, i. 262.

² Βίον τε κοινὸν ἅπασιν βιοῦν: *Hermot.* 84.

³ *Thoughts of the Emp. M. Aur. Ant.* ii. 5 (George Long).

his works that shows a gleam of tenderness or sympathy, Lucian puts a similar phrase into the mouth of Charon, the representative of death, as he sat with Mercury upon the summit of Parnassus ; but, apparently, he makes use of it only to expose its inanity. 'Ought I not to shout down to this madding crowd,' asks Charon, 'to cease from their ignoble strife for empty honours and worthless wealth, and to live with death always before their eyes?' 'You would shout in vain,' replies the god; 'their ears are stopped with ignorance and error, and they are as deaf as Ulysses when he fled from the Syrens.'¹ Mercury, we may take it, was expressing the sentiments of Lucian himself, to whom the solemnity of Charon's advice appealed in vain.

We obtain a somewhat more definite view of his teaching from the counsel given by Tiresias to Menippus :—'the lives of those who keep aloof from the Schools are the best and wisest. Abstain, then, from discussions on high matters, and be not over-curious about the nature of things. Avoid vain babblings, and let your object be to make the best of circumstances.

¹ *Contemplantes*, 20-1.

Thus you may pass through life smiling, taking nothing too seriously.'¹

We have here the whole body of positive moral² instruction he has bequeathed to us, and it cannot be said to be too extensive or too lofty a code. Its most striking quality is its meanness. Were every man 'to live like others,' there would be an end to all further progress in literature and art, to every effort to 'rise on stepping-stones of our dead selves to higher things.' To abstain from investigating physical phenomena would be to arrest the march of science and open the door to universal and triumphant ignorance, with its invariable attendant, grovelling superstition. The promise given in the final clause of Tiresias's advice is an empty one, and it is difficult to explain how a man of Lucian's observation could have put it in the prophet's mouth. That no man, however virtuous, can 'go through life smiling,' is a lesson of universal experience, which (as Lucian must have known) has been admirably stated by Herodotus. 'In this life, short though it be,'

¹ 'Ο τῶν ιδιωτῶν ἄριστος βίος καὶ σωφρονέστερος ὡς τῆς ἀφροσύνης πανσάμενος τοῦ μετεωρολογεῖν καὶ τέλη καὶ ἀρχὰς ἐπισκοπεῖν καὶ καταπτύσας τῶν σοφῶν τούτων συλλογισμῶν καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα λήρον ἡγησάμενος τοῦτο μόνον ἐξ ἅπαντος θηράσῃ, ὅπως τὸ παρὸν εἰς θέμενος παραδράμῃς γελῶν τὰ πολλὰ καὶ περὶ μηδὲν ἐσπουδακώς: *Necyoman.* 21.

² The word 'moral' is used in its broadest signification.

he says, 'there has never sojourned a man, however fortunate he may have appeared, but has had occasion, not once but many times, to wish himself dead rather than alive.'¹

It will be observed that Lucian does not use the word 'virtue' in his precepts. Did he hold virtue to be good?

He speaks of virtue in several passages as if he regarded it with by no means unqualified admiration;² but Hume suggests³ that such passages as those referred to may be only the petulant expression of Lucian's disgust at the hypocrisy of many professors of philosophy, or of his weariness of the virtue of the Schools, which everybody prated about⁴ and nobody practised. This suggestion gains a certain weight from the passage in 'Hermotimus' in which Lycinus explains that virtue consists 'in works, in doing what is just and wise and manly.' That he thought it good—or at least preferable to the practice of the Stoics—is shown

¹ vii. 46.

² *Ἡ ποῦ γὰρ ἔστιν ἡ πολυθρύλητος ἀρετὴ κ. τ. λ. : *Concil. Deor.* 13. *Συνάγοντες εὐεξαπάτητα μειράκια τὴν τε πολυθρύλητον ἀρετὴν τραγῳδοῦσι : Icaromen.* 30. 'Ἀρετὴν τινα . . . μεγάλην τῇ φωνῇ ξυνειρόντων : *Τίμον*, 9. *Συνεχές ἐπιρραψφδῶν τὰ πάνθημα ἐκείνα τοῦ Ἡσιόδου περὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς ἔπη καὶ τὸν ἰδρῶτα καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ τὸ ἄκρον ἀνάβασιν : Necyoman.* 4.

³ *Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, sect. vi.

⁴ Pan says : ἀκούω γε αὐτῶν αἰεὶ κεκραγόντων καὶ ἀρετὴν τινα . . . διεξιόντων : *Bis Accus.* 11.

by the words that follow: 'instead of seeking after virtue and practising it, you Stoics fritter away your lives in the pursuit of pitiful phrases, in carrying on useless wranglings, and in discussing insoluble riddles.'¹ These remarks, of course, apply only to Lucian's views at the time he wrote *Hermotimus*.¹ No general statement can be made of the creed of a man wafted about by every wind of doctrine, who was so reticent about his own positive opinions (if he had any).

It may seem superfluous to give a reason to show that Lucian believed (at one moment of his life) the just and wise and manly to be good; but it is necessary to do so. For if, during the interval that elapsed between writing '*Hermotimus*' and writing '*Necyomantia*' and the pamphlets referred to by Hume, he had imbibed to any very great extent the doctrines of the Sceptics—and who can say whether he had or not?—he might have refused to admit that the just and wise and manly were good in themselves; in which case Hume's suggestion would lose all weight. 'We do not say anything is good or

¹ Ἡ μὲν ἀρετὴ ἐν ἔργοις δήπου ἐστίν, οἷον ἐν τῷ δίκαια πράττειν καὶ σοφὰ καὶ ἀνδρεία, ὑμεῖς δὲ . . . ἀφέντες ταῦτα ζητεῖν καὶ ποιεῖν ῥημάτια δύσσηνα μελετᾶτε καὶ συλλογισμοὺς καὶ ἀπορίας: *Hermot.* 79.

evil with the conviction that it is probably so,' says the sceptical writer, Sextus Empiricus, who lived very shortly after Lucian.¹ 'He who is of the opinion that anything is either good or bad by nature is always troubled. . . . But he who is undecided about things good and bad by nature neither seeks nor avoids anything eagerly, and is therefore in a state of tranquillity.'²

Unlike Lucian, the other great satirists of the world are more or less free from the charge of being entirely negative in their morality and rules for the conduct of life.

Few can read the lukewarm 'Satires' of Horace without exclaiming, 'I would thou wert hot or cold'; but no one can accuse him of being merely destructive. 'Who is free?' he asks. 'The man who has dominion over himself,' answers his slave; 'the man whom neither poverty nor chains nor death can affright; who sternly subdues his appetites, and despises empty

¹ *Hypotyposes*, i. para. 226; trans. by Miss M. M. Patrick.

² *Ἀραξαίια*: *Ib.* para. 27-8. Pyrrhonism was obviously a species of Hedonism. Perhaps the best criticism ever passed upon the Sceptics, who 'neither sought nor avoided anything eagerly,' was Pyrrho's own. He eagerly sought safety in flight on one occasion when chased by a dog, and on being taxed with inconsistency, he said that it was difficult to give up entirely one's humanity (*Diog. Laert.* ix. 11, 66). His philosophy was an attempt to evade the necessary modes of human thought and language.

honours. Against such an one Misfortune advances in vain.'¹

Let us present to the Immortals, says Persius, not offerings of silver and of gold, but 'a mind instinct with the feeling of duty to God and man, a soul pure even in its secret recesses, and a heart deep-dyed in generous honour.'²

'Pray for a bold spirit, free from all fear of death,' says Juvenal; 'a spirit that "counts death kind Nature's signal of retreat"; that can endure what labour may be necessary, that knows not anger and covets nothing. . . . The only path that surely leads to peace leads through virtue.'³

'Knowledge without conscience is but the ruin of the soul,' writes Gargantua to his son. 'It behoveth thee to serve, to love, to fear God, and on Him to cast all thy thoughts and all thy hope, and, by faith formed in charity, to cleave unto Him, so that thou mayst never be separated from Him by thy sins. Suspect the abuses of the world. Set not thy heart on vanity, for this life is transitory, but the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. Be serviceable to all thy neighbours, and love them as thyself.'⁴

¹ *Sat.* ii. 7, 83.

² ii. 73.

³ x. 357.

⁴ Rabelais, *Pant.* ii. 8.

Swift delivers his message with characteristic irony:—‘It is likewise proposed as a great advantage to the public, that if we once discard the system of the Gospel, all religion will of course be banished for ever; and consequently along with it those grievous prejudices of education, which under the names of *virtue, conscience, honour, justice* and the like, are so apt to disturb the peace of human minds, and the notions whereof are so hard to be eradicated, by right reason or free thinking, sometimes during the whole course of our lives. . . . But I conceive some scattered notions about a superior power to be of singular use for the common people, as furnishing excellent materials to keep children quiet when they grow peevish, and providing topics of amusement in a tedious winter night.’¹

The moral of Voltaire’s greatest work ‘Candide’ is:—‘il faut cultiver notre jardin.’ ‘Travaillons, sans raisonner, dit Martin; c’est le seul moyen de rendre la vie supportable’²—Carlyle’s doctrine of honest work. But it was in practical humanity, rather than in theoretical morality, that Voltaire was distinguished. He struggled for years to redress the monstrous wrongs of the Calas family, to rescue

¹ *The Abolishing of Christianity.*

² Chapter xxx.

the Sirven family from starvation, to release Espinasse from the galleys. After being sentenced to death, Admiral Byng sent Voltaire his warmest thanks for Richelieu's letter (which Voltaire had forwarded to him and which was laid before the court-martial) exonerating the unfortunate Admiral from blame.¹

It is especially when we compare the moral satires of Lucian with those of Persius and Juvenal, both of whom were inferior to him in humour and imagination, that we discover why he makes so mean a figure in morals. He saw clearly enough the shortness, the paltriness,² the irony of life;³ but he had a very imperfect conception of its misery. A teacher who offers us a recipe that will enable us 'to go through life smiling' cannot be taken seriously. In Lucian's view men are 'mostly fools' or knaves, and life is an extravaganza,⁴ a show,⁵ at certain scenes

¹ Parton's *Life of Voltaire*, ii. 247.

² Τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων πράγματα . . . οὐτ' ἐλπίδος οὔτε φόβου ἄξια : *Demon.* 20.

³ Γελοῖα καὶ ταπεινὰ καὶ ἀβέβαια τὰ ἀνθρώπινα πάντα εὔρισκον : *Icaromen.* 4.

⁴ Ὅσπερ ἂν εἴ τις παραστησάμενος πολλοὺς χορευτὰς . . . ἔπειτα προστάξει τῶν ἀδόντων ἐκάστῳ, τὴν συνῳδῖαν ἀφέντα, ἴδιον ἄδειν μέλος : *Icaromen.* 17.

⁵ Τοιγάρτοι ἐκεῖνα ὀρῶντι ἐδόκει μοι ὁ τῶν ἀνθρώπων βίος πομπὴν τιμὴν μακρὰ προσεοικέναι κ. τ. λ.—Carlyle's 'ironic procession of mortals, with laughter of Gods in the background' : *Necyoman.* 16.

of which, as showman, he affords us a glance. But all the laughter of Momus and his crew cannot drown 'the still, sad music of humanity.' Ere we take many steps from his booth, we are harrowed by

Famine's faint groan and penury's silent tear.¹

Lucian was not one of those great souls who 'saw life steadily and saw it whole.' His narrow Asiatic mind saw but two of its many faces—the foolish and the vicious. As a moralist he takes a tenth place.

The Greek religion was the attempt of man to give 'separate expressions of the Inscrutable by means of particular Deities,'² each of whom manifested himself through one of the powers of nature. As the phenomena of nature were believed to be the acts of the gods, or to arise from their sufferings, a cycle of myths sprung up, some of them ludicrous, others scandalous, precisely similar to those now attached to the Hindoo gods. 'Pious poets and grave philosophers felt shocked by such myths, and tried to mend them or boldly denied them; but they constituted nevertheless the faith of the majority.'³

¹ Shelley's *Queen Mab*.

² Goethe in Eckermann's *Conversations, etc.* 524.

³ Prof. C. P. Tiele in *Encyclop. Brit.* art. 'Religions.'

By the second century the Græco-Roman religion had undergone much alteration from the assimilation of foreign doctrine. Gods had been admitted from Egypt, and goddesses from Syria;¹ but the basis of the popular faith was still the old religion, and it still possessed considerable vitality. 'Is it an irreparable evil,' asks Mercury in 'Jupiter Tragedus,' 'that a few disbelieve in our existence? We have the many with us—most of the Greeks, the great majority of the lower orders, and all the Barbarians.'² As Professor Bury points out,³ the very power to assimilate elements of other creeds and the creation of new deities (such as Annona) show the vigour of the old religion at this time. Its strength is further proved by existing inscriptions, which directly reflect popular beliefs, and by the fact that it did not collapse for two centuries after Lucian's death. It is evident, therefore, that he had an exceedingly small share, if any at all, in the overthrow of the Greek religion. Its decay and downfall were due to large, general causes entirely beyond the control of Lucian and his friends, which would probably have produced the

¹ See the speeches of Momus in *Concil. Deorum*.

² 53.

³ *Hist. Rom. Emp. 27 B.C. to 180 A.D.*, 576.

same effect had they never been born. There is no reason to suppose that the small band of cultured sceptics to whom Lucian read his satires had any desire to subvert the popular religion. It is not even quite certain that he himself aimed at its destruction: M. Croiset, for instance, looks upon him as a light-hearted mocker who ridiculed the gods for mere amusement, without any definite object in view.¹ But it is difficult to believe that any man should discharge satire after satire against the religion of his country without some premeditation. M. Martha feels no doubt upon the matter: 'Il ne fit pas rire à dépens (des dieux) par légèreté, comme avait fait Aristophane, mais bien de propos délibéré.'²

Be this as it may, Lucian made a series of brilliant attacks upon the religious legends; and had he rested on his laurels thereafter, no stone could have been cast at him. But he went a step further: having exploded the legends of the gods he proceeded to demolish the gods themselves.³ With the limits of satire adopted in these pages, this attempt was as inartistic as it was impracticable. There is no gainsaying

¹ *Essai sur Lucien*, 202. ² *Moralistes sous l'Emp. Rom.* 427.

³ It is sufficient to mention *Jupiter Tragædus*.



Burke's aphorism :—' man is a religious animal.' The idea of a Supreme Power is indelibly impressed upon his mind, and Lucian could no more efface it than he could unsphere the moon. Could he have looked for one moment into the future, he would have burnt his books ; for that glance would have shown him Christianity sitting in the seat of the vanished Greek religion— or as he would have put it, one superstition supplanted by another.¹ 'He looked upon Christianity as a superstition,' says Sig. Cantù.² This is but a partial truth. He looked upon *all* religions as superstitions. 'He denies them all,' says Renan ;³ 'he attacks all religious beliefs,' says M. Martha.⁴

Lucian's attack upon an Over-ruling Power marks one of the radical distinctions between him and a far greater man, Voltaire.⁵ Both possessed extreme cleverness rather than genius, extra-

¹ 'It is not hard to understand the causes of the resolution of (Religion) into its first seeds or principles, which are only an opinion of a Deity and Powers invisible and supernatural ; that can never be so abolished out of human nature, but that new Religions may again be made to spring out of them, by the culture of such men as for such purpose are in reputation.'—Hobbes, *Leviathan*, pt. i. 12 (58).

² *Dialoghi dei Morti*, Napoli, 1882, p. 9.

³ *Marc-Aurèle*, 373.

⁴ *Moralistes sous l'Emp. Rom.* 445.

⁵ Sig. Cantù says: 'Luciano non presenta che una faccie di Voltaire. Questi era immenso, e alla sua ironia mescolava entusi-

ordinary versatility and acuteness, a certain superficiality, withering wit and an inimitable style. Neither of them ever expressed a great thought or painted a great scene. Both of them struck at a great religion, but they had very different objects in view. Voltaire, a theist,¹ tried to level the obstacles that barred the way into the temple of Theism; Lucian, an atheist,² tried to raze the temple itself. Under no circumstances could Lucian have been successful. Men may be persuaded to exchange their religion for a better one, but they refuse to part with it for an empty scepticism or blank atheism.

asmo ed amore per l' umanità Luciano invece, privo dell' istinto dell' avvenire, non sa altro che opprimere il presente colle inesauribile sue facezie. Ma il mondo era agitato dal bisogno di credere, d' appoggiarsi a qualche cosa di più che umano.' *Dial. dei Morti*, p. 10. This criticism does not seem to me to do justice to Lucian. He was neither man of science, poet, philosopher nor dramatist, as was Voltaire; but he outstripped Voltaire in every species of composition in which imagination plays the leading part. Voltaire was by no means distinguished in art criticism, in which Lucian occupies the front rank, and he is so inferior as to be out of all comparison with Lucian in picturesque narrative—e.g. the abduction of Europa, *Dial. Mar.* 15. Voltaire could not have written the best passages in the *Contemplantes*.

¹ *L'Hist. de Jenni*, chaps. x. xi.; *Zadig*, chaps. xii. xx.; and the chapters on Mille Hubert and Spinoza in *Lettres à . . . le Prince de Brunswick*; Œuvres, etc., Desrez, Paris, 1837, vol. vi.

² I cannot agree with Herr Jacob: 'Lucian . . . darf nicht ein Gottesleugner nach modernen Begriffen heißen': *Characteristik Lucians*, Hamburg, 1832, p. xx. Herr Schœl takes a *via media*, describing Lucian as a man 'der sich zum Atheismus hinneigte': *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*, ii. 491.

Lucian had nothing better to offer them: his satire is essentially destructive. He might have exclaimed with Mephistopheles:

Ich bin der Geist der stets verneint.

The general conclusion is that, although possessed of a keen understanding, Lucian was not a thinking man in the highest sense of the phrase: a conclusion confirmed by a remark of Gœthe's:—'the man of understanding finds almost everything ridiculous; the man of thought scarcely anything.'¹ Lucian wisely abstained from the attempt to formulate a philosophical creed for himself;² for though ever ready to pull down, he was quite incapable of building up.³ His mind was shallow, his views were narrow, and his ideals were low. He had neither the patience nor the ability to study and compare the merits of large systems of thought, and he had not the heart to be a moralist. Geometry and Astronomy he held to be nonsense, Philosophy a delusion, and Religion a superstition.

¹ *Elective Affinities*, chap. iv.

² 'Impropre par tempérament et par éducation à grouper des idées complexes pour en former un tout, il se décida de bonne heure par principe à ne pas le tenter.'—Croiset's *Essai sur Lucien*, 112.

³ 'Seiner negativen Natur war es nicht beschieden, Neues aufzubauen.'—Sommerbrodt's *Ausgewählte Schriften des Lucians*, vol. i. p. xxxii.

V

CHARACTERISTICS

MUCH as has been written about him, no thoroughly satisfactory appreciation of Lucian's character has yet been given to us, nor is one ever likely to be. His character was essentially oriental, and (for this reason) defies analysis beyond a certain point. As M. Aubé puts it:— 'il est en lui-même si ondoyant qu'il échappe à qui veut le saisir et entreprend de fixer ses traits.'¹ At first sight he seems to have been a bundle of contradictions. Although a Barbarian,² he wrote the best Greek of his time; he was an Oriental, yet he was not superstitious; although a Syrian, he had some regard for truth. If he inclined towards the doctrines of any school of philosophers one moment, it was only

¹ *Hist. des Persécutions de l'Eglise*, Paris, 1875, ii. 112.

² 'Rhetoric' says she found him 'quite a boy, speaking a barbarous language, and clothed in a kandys after the Assyrian fashion' (κομιδῇ μειράκιον ὄντα, βάρβαρον ἔτι τὴν φωνὴν καὶ μονορουχὶ κἀνδυν ἐνδεδυκότα ἐς τὸν Ἀσσύριον τρόπον: *Bis Accus.* 27).

to turn upon them and rend them the next. A foreigner, he settled among the Greeks and adapted himself to their way of life without any apparent difficulty. He was successively sculptor, rhetorician, philosopher, satirist and Government official.

When closely examined, many of these contradictions will be found to be only apparent.

In Chapter iv. I have endeavoured to explain his position with regard to the philosophical schools.

The fact that an exceptionally clever Syrian wrote excellent Greek after a prolonged sojourn among Greek-speaking men is at least intelligible.

The ease and rapidity with which he changed, not only his various domiciles and beliefs, but his avocations, present no difficulties to us if we bear in mind that he was a Western Asiatic. Such transformations are thoroughly characteristic of the regions where he sprung. No better or truer illustration of the flexibility and fickleness of the oriental character can be found than in Morier's amusing 'Adventures of Hajjî Baba of Ispahan,'—barber, dervish, executioner, mollah, and Secretary of Legation.

There is little difficulty in understanding his

sympathy with Greek life. In addition to its freedom, it had many points in common with the life he had been born to. Owing to the practice of slavery, the Greek race had been for centuries 'becoming a fiction. Miltiades, Thucydides, and Demosthenes are examples to the point.'¹ The unions between the Greeks and their female slaves inevitably introduced an oriental element into the national life, and in the second century there may have been as close a resemblance between Greek and Syrian in manners and habits as there is unmistakably at the present time.

'There is nothing,' says Goethe, 'in which people more completely betray their character than in what they find to laugh at.'² Let us try to get a glimpse at Lucian's character through the incidents that amuse him.

'Come and see the new arrivals,' says Antisthenes to his companions in the Shades. 'It will be pleasant to see some of them weeping, and to hear others entreating to be let go.'³ Presently Diogenes, speaking of certain other ghosts, says, 'their groaning afforded me no

¹ W. G. Clarke's *Peloponnesus*, 328.

² *Elective Affinities*, chap. iv.

³ *Dial. Mort.* xxvii. 1.

common pleasure.’¹ ‘I shall laugh when I recognise the naked Princes on board my boat,’ says Charon, ‘without purple or diadem or golden couch.’² ‘I was exceedingly delighted,’ says the amiable Menippus, ‘when I saw the ghosts of men who possessed wealth and birth and power, naked and bowed down in the Shades, recalling as in a dream their former happiness.’³ He adds shortly afterwards:— ‘the excellent Diogenes dwells (in the Shades) near Sardanapalus and Midas and others who lived in the lap of luxury; and often, when he hears them bewailing their former fortune, he rolls on his back with delight and sings in so strident and harsh a voice as to drown their lamentations.’⁴ ‘I could not contain my laughter,’ says the same character, ‘when I saw Philip (King of Macedon) in the Shades, eking out an existence by mending old shoes.’⁵

In Lucian’s own time Peregrinus (or Proteus), the Cynic, resolved to prove the sincerity of his belief by burning himself to death in public during the Olympic Games. Just before leaping into the flames he delivered a short address,

¹ *Dial. Mort.* 7.

² *Charon*, 14.

³ *Necyomantia*, 12.

⁴ *Ibid.* 18.

⁵ *Ib.* 17. In Rabelais, Alexander is substituted for Philip, *Pant.* ii. 80.

hoping possibly that the crowd would forcibly compel him to forego his mad design. A few of them did call out, 'live! for the sake of the Greeks'; but the majority shouted, 'keep your promise.' On this, the old man 'grew pale, trembled and was silent.' If ever there was a piteous sight, surely this was one; yet in describing the incident afterwards to a friend, Lucian (who was present) says:—'you can easily understand how much I was diverted by him.'¹

Lucian may have been, as he tells us, incontinent of laughter;² but this is awful mirth to our ears.

Lucian's heartlessness naturally exercised an evil influence on his works, and numerous instances of bad taste are to be found in them, from which a little generosity and kindly feeling might have saved him. We may coin some excuse for a voluminous writer who describes Neptune as using his trident, 'like a pot stick,' to stir up the sea;³ or who says of a multitude of the dead: 'some were old and mouldering; others fresh and compact, especially the Egyp-

¹ 'Εγὼ δὲ, εἰκάξεις, οἶμαι, πὼς ἐγέλων: *Peregrinus*, 34.

² Ἀκρατῆς γέλωτος: *Pseudolog.* 7.

³ Ὅσπερ τορύνην τινὰ ἐμβάλων τὴν τριαίνην: *Charon*, 7.

tians, owing to the durability of the pickle.'¹ It is more difficult to find an excuse for him when he tells us that Proteus, on coming forward to leap into the fire, 'stood before the multitude dressed in a very dirty shirt.'² But there are instances of bad taste for which no excuse can be found.

A writer of the second century could not reasonably be supposed to share in the transports of a poet of the Renaissance about Helen of Troy:—

O thou art fairer than the evening air,
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars.³

But Lucian might have extended to her some small measure of the pity shown by Homer. When, 'shedding tender tears,' she approached Priam as he sat over the Scæan Gate, looking down upon the two armies drawn up for battle, he called her to him, saying: 'come and sit by me, dear child; in no way are you to blame for these troubles.'⁴ He well knew that to her were owing the disasters that threatened him,

¹ διὰ τὸ πολυαρκὲς τῆς ταριχείας : *Necyomantia*, 15. The pickle, of course, means the chemicals used in embalming the dead.

² ἕστη ἐν ἄθόνῃ ῥυτίσῃ ἀκριβῶς : *Peregrinus*, 36.

³ Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*.

⁴ *Iliad*, iii. 162.

yet he addressed her with a gentleness worthy of the best days of chivalry, The old king was melted by a woman's grief and moved by her strange beauty. But her beauty and sorrows had no softening influence for the Syrian satirist. 'I saw Helen in the flesh,' says the talking Cock to his master, Micyllus the cobbler; 'and her skin was so white and her neck was so long that anybody could guess her father was a swan. As to her age, she must have been as old as her mother-in-law, Hecuba.'¹ Elsewhere he tells us that she was scourged and banished from Elysium to Tartarus.² It does not need transcendent literary ability to throw mud upon the exquisite creations of the greatest writers: any hireling can do it. But is it witty or humorous or generous? Lucian failed in these passages as an artist, and deserved to fail. Helen of Troy was no fit figure for the finger of scorn or ridicule to point at. She arouses our compassion when she speaks of her brother-in-law Agamemnon as

My brother once, before my days of shame!
And oh! that still he bore a brother's name.³

When she tries to explain the absence of her

¹ *Gallus*, 17.

² *Veræ Hist.* ii. 27.

³ *Iliad*, iii. 180 (Pope).

brothers from the fight before Troy, she moves our pity :—

. . . they shun to join
The fight of warriors, fearful of the shame
And deep disgrace that on my name attend.¹

The woman who could thus lament over the corpse of Hector claims our tears :—

Ah, dearest friend ! in whom the Gods had joined
The mildest manners with the bravest mind ;
Now twice ten years (unhappy years) are o'er
Since Paris brought me to the Trojan shore ;
(O had I perished, ere that form divine
Seduced this soft, this easy heart of mine !)
Yet it was ne'er my fate from thee to find
A deed ungentle, or a word unkind :
When others cursed the authoress of their woe,
Thy pity checked my sorrows in their flow :
If some proud brother eyed me with disdain,
Or scornful sister with her sweeping train,
Thy gentle accents softened all my pain.
For thee I mourn ; and mourn myself in thee,
The wretched source of all this misery :
The fate I caused, for ever I bemoan ;
Sad Helen has no friend, now thou art gone !
Thro' Troy's wide streets abandon'd shall I roam !
In Troy detested, as abhorr'd at home !²

¹ *Iliad*, iii. 241 (Lord Derby). Little though she knew it, 'life-giving Earth had received them both back into her bosom in Lacedæmon, their dear native land'; *ib.* 243-4. We cannot wonder at the judgment of Theocritus upon Homer : 'Homer suffices for all !'

. ἄλις πάντεσσιν Ὅμηρος.

² *Ib.* xxiv. 762 (Pope).

In the eleventh book of the 'Odyssey,' Homer represents Achilles as saying to Ulysses when he visited the Shades :—

Rather I choose laboriously to bear
 A weight of woes and breathe the vital air,
 A slave of some poor hind that toils for bread,
 Than reign the scepter'd monarch of the dead.¹

Plato took exception to this passage in his 'Republic,' and the grave Sir Thomas Browne questions 'whether it be handsomely said of Achilles, that living contemner of death.'² The sentiment uttered by Achilles is just suggested in Fielding's 'Journey from this World to the Next,' but so delicately as to be quite unobjectionable. 'Notwithstanding the joy we ghosts declared at our death (when journeying by coach to the Shades), there was not one of us who did not mention the accident which occasioned it as a thing we would have avoided if we could.'³ The quick eye of the Syrian saw that this unfortunate speech in the 'Odyssey' might be used to disparage Achilles; and accordingly, in the fifteenth 'Dialogue of the Dead,' Antilochus rebukes Achilles for uttering such unworthy thoughts. Yet other satirists could spare a

¹ Line 489 *et seq.* (Pope).

² *Hydriotaphia*, chap. iv.

³ Ed. of 1783, p. 8.

word of praise for a dead hero, even though he had been the enemy of their country :—

View Hannibal's grim figure, view his face !
O for some master-hand that form to trace !

No swords, nor spears, nor stones from engines hurled,
Shall quell the man whose frown alarmed the world.¹

'Ha ! fool, dost thou weep ?' is the mode in which Lucian permits Diogenes to address Alexander the Great in the Shades.² How differently does Fielding treat another warrior under similar circumstances ! The reception a ghost met with, he tells us, depended upon the number of those who reached the Shades through his instrumentality. For example, the Emperor of the Dead caressed Caligula 'on account of his pious wish that he could send all the Romans hither at one blow.' But Marlborough was received with marked coldness, 'for he never sent Him a subject he could keep from Him, nor did He ever get a single subject by his means, but He lost a thousand others for him.'³

We cannot compare Lucian's treatment of kings in the nether world with Fielding's ; for the latter got only a glimpse of Charles XII of

¹ Juvenal, x. 147-166.

² *Dialog. Mort.* xiii. 4.

³ *Journey from this World to the Next*, p. 13.

Sweden and Alexander the Great, and though he thought he had seen Louis XIV there, he was mistaken. 'One fat figure, well-dressed in the French fashion, was received with extraordinary complaisance by the Emperor. I imagined him to be Louis XIV himself, but (as I was afterwards told) he was a celebrated French cook.'¹

Let us take another extract from the 'Dialogues of the Dead.'

Menippus. Are there not some persons shouting on earth?

Mercury. Yes, and in a number of different places. A crowd on their way to an Assembly are shouting for joy at the death of Lampichus, King of the Geloans. The women have laid violent hands on his wife, and the boys are stoning his young children. Others, in Sicyon, are applauding the funeral oration of Diophantus the rhetorician over this Crato here; and the mother of Damasius the wrestler, with a number of women, is just beginning to chant his dirge. No one seems to care for you, Menippus; your body is lying in peace.

Menippus. Wait a bit, and you will hear the dogs howling round it, and the crows flapping their wings when they come to bury it.²

Men making merry over a man's death; women harrying a woman; boys stoning helpless children; dogs tearing a corpse, while the

¹ *Journey from this World to the Next*, p. 13.

² *Dialog. Mort.* 10.

crows are impatiently awaiting their turn;—these things are revolting—to us at least.

Throughout his works, Lucian pursues with relentless rancour the philosopher Socrates, living,¹ dying,² and dead.³ Gibbon thought Lucian inimitable:⁴ let us be thankful that his treatment of Socrates has proved to be so. When Socrates was condemned to death, he exclaimed to his judges: ‘the hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways—I to die, and you to live. Which is better, God only knows.’⁵ He returned to his prison, and when the attendant presented the cup of hemlock to him, he took it ‘in the easiest and gentlest manner, without the least fear or change of colour or feature. . . . Hitherto (continues the narrator) most of us had been able to control our sorrow; but now when we saw him drinking, and saw too that he had finished the draught, we could no longer forbear, and in spite of myself my own tears were flowing fast.’ In a short time Socrates lay down and a sheet was thrown over him. Presently ‘a movement was heard and the attendants uncovered him: his

¹ *Vit. Auct.* 15-18.

² *Dialog. Mort.* 21.

³ *Veræ Hist.* ii. 17, 19, 23. ⁴ *Decline and Fall*, etc. i. 195.

⁵ Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, ii. 135 (Jowett).

eyes were set, and Crito closed his eyes and mouth. Such was the end of our friend; concerning whom I may truly say, that of all the men of his time whom I have known, he was the wisest and justest and best.’¹ ‘It is agreed by all,’ says another account, ‘that no man ever suffered death with greater constancy than Socrates.’² Let us pass to the version of this sad scene bequeathed to us by Lucian through the mouth of Cerberus.

Cerberus. At a distance (*i.e.* before death stared him in the face), Socrates was of good countenance, and seemed not to fear death at all; and he evidently wished to impress those looking on by his fearlessness. But when he bent down to enter the cavern (*i.e.* when upon the point of death); when he saw the dark void before him; when the hemlock tortured him, and I tugged away at his feet;—then he screamed like an infant, lamented his lost children, and would not be comforted.

Menippus. The man, then, was an impostor, who was anything but indifferent to death?

Cerberus. Not quite that: when he found death was inevitable, he plucked up his courage and made a merit of a necessity, in order to gain the applause of the bystanders.³

Lucian, apparently, did not share in the opinion of his sovereign, Marcus Aurelius:—‘lice killed Socrates.’⁴ ‘The deep damnation of his

¹ Plato's *Phædo*, ii. 265 (Jowett).

² Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, iv. 8.

³ *Dial. Mort.* 21.

⁴ *Thoughts of the Emp. M. Aur. Ant.* iii. 3 (George Long).

taking off ' did not quicken the beat of Lucian's pulse. Socrates was put to death? Well, then, there was one philosopher less in the world. Far better would it have been for Lucian's reputation had he followed the advice of Tiresias :

Spare the departed ; war not with the dust,¹

and left unwritten this ignoble Dialogue.

A perusal of ' Peregrinus ' shows that Lucian's notions of law and justice were thoroughly oriental.

Peregrinus, the Cynic, we may suppose, incurred Lucian's wrath during the voyage they made together from the Troad to Athens in 164 ; but how he did so is unknown. As we are for ever precluded from hearing Peregrinus' account of himself, it is all the more imperative to sift to the uttermost Lucian's account of him.

Can we receive without question Lucian's accusations against Peregrinus? Most certainly we cannot ; first, because everyone is liable to lose a sense of proportion when stating an enemy's crimes, and, secondly, because there is some reason to believe that on another occasion Lucian brought forward charges which he could not sub-

¹ ἀλλ' εἴκε τῶ θανάτῳ μὴδ' ὀλωλότα
κέντει

SOPHOCLES, *Antig.* 1029.

stantiate. He failed, as he tells us himself, to obtain justice from the Governor of Bithynia, Lollianus Avitus,¹ against Alexander, the magician, whom he had accused of conspiring against his life and of many other iniquities.² The Governor's excuse for not proceeding against Alexander—his connexion with the powerful Rutilianus—seems to have been a mere pretext for dismissing charges in which he had little belief. Granted that Rutilianus had influence; yet did Lucian, a well-known pleader and rhetorician of the highest ability, count for nothing? It is hardly credible that a high Roman official in the reign of Marcus Aurelius would have ventured to suppress serious charges for such a reason, had they been supported by sufficient evidence. But on Lucian's own showing the evidence was almost *nil*. After leaving Abono-

¹ *Alexander*, 57. For *αὐτός*, line 6 from bottom of this par., Burmeister and Jacobitz read: *Αὔειρος* = *Ἀουῖρος* = (Lollianus) Avitus.

² From the phrase *ὁ θεὸς Μάρκος*, used in *Alexander*, 48, it is clear that the tract was written after the Emperor's death in 180 A.D.—*i.e.* at least fifteen years after the events which it professes to narrate. This does not add to its credibility. 'Les *Mémoires*, écrits plusieurs années après les faits, souvent même à la fin de la carrière de l'auteur, ont introduit dans l'histoire des erreurs innombrables. Il faut se faire une règle de traiter les *Mémoires* avec une défiance spéciale, comme des documents de seconde main, malgré leur apparence de témoignages contemporains': *Introduit. aux Études Historiques*, MM. Langlois et Seignobos, Paris, 1898, p. 148.

tichos in a ship provided for him by Alexander, Lucian observed the captain, who was in tears, addressing the sailors ; and presently the captain informed him that he had just succeeded in dissuading the sailors from obeying Alexander's order to them to throw him (Lucian) overboard. There is nothing inherently improbable in this story. Having been bitten and publicly ridiculed by Lucian, Alexander nourished a lively hatred against him. But the only evidence we have that Alexander actually proceeded to extremities and ordered Lucian's death, is hearsay evidence of the weakest kind, i.e. Lucian's report of what the captain told him Alexander had said. Such evidence carries little or no weight with it.

The intervention of the tearful captain is in itself somewhat suspicious. If Alexander actually attempted Lucian's life, he must have either *ordered* the captain and crew to drown him, or offered them a bribe to do so. The first supposition is untenable ; for if Alexander possessed such power as to be able to order with impunity the death of a well-known rhetorician, the captain would have been undone by disobeying him. It would, no doubt, have cost him his life. Yet the captain took his own

course without any misgivings. If then Alexander offered a bribe, why did not the captain, instead of making a speech, take the simple and natural step of urging Lucian, who was then well to do, to outbribe Alexander? A bribe would have been a far more potent argument than any that could have been brought forward by the most eloquent and lachrymose of captains. But there are at least two other versions of the transaction which are quite as probable as Lucian's. May not the crew themselves have plotted the murder of their opulent passenger for the sake of plunder—such crimes were not, and are not, unknown—and used Alexander's name to cover themselves, when the captain discovered the plot? Or may not the whole story have been concocted by the captain himself, with the object of extracting a substantial thank-offering from the Syrian traveller before he disembarked? Whatever be the truth, there was little or no evidence to go upon, and Lucian failed to get a summons granted against Alexander: he was able to formulate charges, but unable to substantiate them before a Roman magistrate. This must not be forgotten when considering his charges against Peregrinus.

Another point to be marked is Lucian's want of moderation in depicting an enemy. Peregrinus and Alexander are painted in Indian ink—not one stroke of lighter tint, not one redeeming feature. Were they fictitious characters, we might rank them with Jonathan Wild, Count Fathom and Barry Lyndon. But they are alleged to have been real men. No such men ever existed off the stage or outside the covers of a romance.

Lucian gives us to understand that he made himself acquainted with Peregrinus' life and crimes: he had irrefutable proofs of his misdoings.¹ Alas! not so long since, a Minister of State assured a foreign House of Deputies that he held in his hand irrefutable proofs of an officer's treason; yet on examination these proofs were found to be forgeries. We must accept Lucian's 'facts' with great caution.

Among many other charges, he says Peregrinus murdered his own father, *because* he was sixty years of age.² Why did he not murder him the year before, *because* he was fifty-nine?

¹ 'Ακούσατέ μου ἐξ ἀρχῆς παραφυλάξαντος τὴν γνώμην αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν βίον ἐπιτηρήσαντος : *Pereg.* 8.

² 'Απέπνιξε τὸν γέροντα οὐκ ἀνασχόμενος αὐτὸν ὑπὲρ ἐξήκοντα ἔτη ἤδη γηρῶντα : *Ib.* 10.

Is this the joke?

Probably no such extraordinary reason for committing murder was ever given, before or since. Two questions are involved in this accusation : first, was the old man murdered ; secondly, did his son murder him ?

There is no reason to suppose that Lucian was ever in Parium (where the alleged murder took place) in his life : his evidence is mere hearsay. Let us, however, accept the murder as a fact. The question remains, did Peregrinus murder his father ? Lucian's evidence again is hearsay. But the Parians believed the son to be guilty. Sixteen centuries afterwards the good people of Languedoc believed that Sirven murdered his daughter, of which crime (as Voltaire showed) he was quite innocent. But Peregrinus fled to Palestine. The innocent Sirven fled to Switzerland. It is needless to pursue the matter further : there is no evidence to convict Peregrinus of parricide. On the other hand, the murder is rendered improbable by the character of Peregrinus left to us by a sober-minded Roman man of letters, who knew him well—Aulus Gellius. 'I met him when I was studying in Athens,' he tells us. 'He was a grave and consistent man, and I frequently visited him to enjoy his useful and sound con-

versation.'¹ Was such a man likely to have murdered his father because he was sixty years of age? Further, Lucian himself has made two admissions which make it still more improbable that Peregrinus murdered his father. First, after remaining some time in Palestine, he returned to Parium. Had there been any evidence of sufficient weight to convict him of parricide, no man in his senses would have taken so rash a step; but it is just such a step as an innocent man might have taken, who supposed that the baseless rumour of his having murdered his father had been forgotten. Secondly, when Peregrinus was about to leap into flames years afterwards, in Lucian's presence, he solemnly invoked the shades of his father and mother to receive him.² It is almost incredible that a parricide should dare to invoke the shade of his father with his last breath. Some weight must be given to a dying man's last words, and Lucian appears to have had no sufficient grounds for his belief that Peregrinus rushed to his fiery death in a transport of vanity and pride. There

¹ 'Philosophum nomine Peregrinum, cui postea cognomentum Proteus factum est, virum gravem atque constantem vidimus, cum Athenis essemus . . . cumque ad eum frequenter veniremus, multa Hercle dicere eum utiliter et honeste audivimus': *Noct. Attic.* xii. 11.

² Δαίμονες μητρῶοι καὶ πατρῶοι δέξασθέ με εὐμενεῖς: *Peregr.* 36.

must be serious doubts upon the question in every thoughtful mind, and Peregrinus ought to have the benefit of the doubt. The whole pamphlet 'Peregrinus' displays clearly how oriental were Lucian's notions of law and justice, and how incapable he was of weighing evidence or suspending his judgment.¹

How many tracts such as 'Alexander' and 'Peregrinus' would we not gladly give in exchange for a few more such as 'Imagines' or 'Zeuxis,' in which Lucian describes ancient works of art? Let us take his description of Ætione's picture, 'The Marriage of Alexander the Great,' which so delighted Rafael that he painted a picture on the same subject.²

The scene is a handsome inner chamber with the nuptial bed in it, on which Roxana, a beautiful girl, is reclining with her eyes fixed on the ground, as though ashamed of looking at Alexander, who stands by. She is attended by several laughing Cupids, one of whom is raising her veil to discover her beauty to the bridegroom, while another, in the capacity of a slave, is pulling off her slippers. A third lays hold of Alexander's robe and seems to be drawing him with might

¹ Wieland doubts 'whether Lucian was so impartial in his judgment of Peregrinus as might be required from a genuine cosmopolite'; the Eng. trans. of his *Hist. of Peregrinus*, pubd. in London, 1796, preface, 8.

² Lübke calls it a 'köstliche Composition': *Rafael's Leben und Werke*, 186. It is described in Guasti's *Raffaello d' Urbino*, ii. 271.



and main towards the bride. Alexander appears in the act of offering her a garland. Hephæstion stands close to him, with a torch in his hand, leaning upon a handsome youth, whom I suppose to be Hymen. In another part of the picture are a number of Cupids playing with Alexander's armour. Two of them, imitating porters tottering under an immense burden, are carrying his spear. At a little distance another, lying upon his shield, is borne aloft, like a king in triumph, by several others; whilst yet another gets into his coat of mail and conceals himself, with the evident design of frightening the rest if they come that way.¹

In the 'Imagines,' which contains a panegyric upon Panthea, the mistress of the Emperor Lucius Verus, Lucian supposes the creation of a statue of perfect grace and beauty by uniting together parts of celebrated existing statues.

From the Cnidian Venus, he says, I shall take the head alone; the forehead, hair, and perfect shape of the eyebrows shall be exactly as Praxiteles has made them, together with that swimming softness and vivacity of the eyes which he has so well represented. The cheeks and expression of the face, the well-proportioned wrists, and the fingers tapering gently towards the tips, shall be taken from the Celestial Venus of Alcamenes. Phidias and his Athene of the Lemnians shall supply us with the contour of the face and the happy proportion of the nose. The lips and neck shall be taken from the Amazon of the same artist. From Calamis we shall borrow the simple dignity of his Sosandra, her solemn and almost imperceptible smile, and her becoming and modest robe.²

¹ *Herodotus*, 5.

² *Imag.* 6. Above and elsewhere, I have made free use of the translations made by Greek scholars. To them must be left the

From beauty of body he passes to beauty of mind.

She is not puffed up by her good fortune, nor does she rely over-much on human prosperity. She is neither insolent nor ridiculous, but keeps upon the level. She is affable to all and treats all as her equals, without pomp or affectation: conduct so much the more agreeable as coming from a person of her position. Those who, like her, use their riches, not for pride and ostentation, but for charity and benevolence, are worthy of any gifts Fortune may bestow upon them. They alone escape envy; for none can grudge riches to those who enjoy them with temperance and moderation, and who, unlike Homer's Até,¹ shrink from stalking over the heads of men and trampling upon everything beneath them. Arrogance and bluster belong to low, grovelling souls unused to riches and prosperity. When Fortune lifts up such men and seats them in her high and winged chariot, they scorn to look below and soar into the clouds. But their wings melt presently, like those of Icarus, and they fall into the waves, amid the scorn and derision of all. On the other hand, those fly with ease and safety who, remembering their wings are but of wax, aspire not too high, content to be borne along just above the waves and to dip their pinions in them. And thus the lady of whom we were speaking gains universal admiration; for all wish that those wings may ever remain unharmed which scatter blessings on all around them.²

We pass from this vision of light and beauty to the gloomy picture of human life and destiny

explanation, or emendation, of the phrase *ὄσα τῆς ὀψέως ἀνθρώπα*, a few lines higher up, which I have translated, 'the expression of the face.'

¹ Injustice swift, erect and unconfined,

Sweeps the wide earth and tramples on mankind.

² *Imag.* 21.

Iliad, xix. 92 (Pope).

painted in the 'Contemplantes.' 'I want to see what human life really is,' says Charon to Mercury, 'in order to discover, if possible, why no ghost ever crosses the Styx without tears.' They accordingly ascend Parnassus and from its summit observe the ways of men.

Charon. Who is that enormous man who overtops those around him by the head and shoulders?

Mercury. That is Milo, the wrestler of Croton. The crowd are cheering him for carrying a bull across the race-course.

Charon. Do you think he ever expects to die?

Mercury. How could the thought of death ever occur to a man of such vigour?

Charon. Yet he will be shortly sailing in my boat, unable to raise a gnat, much less a bull. Who is that dignified man there: not a Greek, to judge from his dress?

Mercury. He is Cyrus, the son of Cambyses, the conqueror of the Medes. At present he is about to attack Croesus . . . whom you may see if you look into that great citadel with the triple wall, Sardis. He is reclining on a golden couch, discoursing with Solon, the Athenian. Would you care to overhear their conversation?

Charon. Very much indeed.

Cræsus. Athenian guest! You have seen my riches and jewels and uncoined gold: tell me, whom of all men do you think the happiest?

Solon. Few are truly happy, O King! but of those I knew, I think Cleobis and Biton, sons of the priestess, were the happiest. They attempted to draw their mother to the temple in a chariot, and died together in the effort.

Cræsus. They may be the happiest, but who comes next?

Solon. Tellus, the Athenian, who lived virtuously and died for his country.

Cræsus. But do not I, wretched man, seem to be happy?

Solon. I do not yet know, O King, nor can anyone know, until you have reached the last hour of your life. Death is the grand criterion : to have lived happily even to the end.

Mercury. The Lydian monarch cannot endure Solon's plain words ; he cannot understand how a poor man should speak his mind to a king without trembling. But he will shortly have only too good reason to remember Solon's words, when he is dragged to his funeral pyre by the order of Cyrus . . . And Cyrus himself will be done to death by the Massagetian Queen, whom you may see riding yonder on a white horse. . . . She is Tomyris, who will cut off Cyrus' head and throw it into a bag full of blood. . . . That young man, not far off, is his son, Cambyses, who having been disappointed in ten thousand projects, will die mad.

Charon. Mercury, who is that in a purple robe,—the man with a diadem, to whom a cook is offering the ring he has found in a fish?

Mercury. Polycrates, the Samian ruler, who thinks he is very happy. Yet this unfortunate prince is about to be betrayed to the Satrap, Orœtes, who will impale him—betrayed by his servant, Mæandrius, who is now standing behind him.

Do you observe that multitude, some of them sailing, some fighting, some litigating, some tilling the land, some exacting usury, some begging?

Charon. I see a motley and confused crowd. Their cities are in truth like hives : each man has his sting and stings his neighbour. Some of them, like wasps, are pillaging the weaker ones. But what are those forms hovering over them unperceived?

Mercury. Hope and Fear, Folly and Pleasure, Avarice, Passion and Hatred. Fear falls upon them sometimes,

and terrifies them. Each man imagines he will succeed in catching one of the Hopes fluttering round his head; yet just as he extends his hand to seize it, it evades his grasp and leaves him disconsolate. You may observe that each man is suspended by a thread fine as cobweb, which is attached to a spindle wound by the Fates.

Charon. I see them; and, for the most part, this man's thread is attached to that man's, and that man's to another's.

Mercury. Just so. It is destined that this man shall be killed by that, and he by some other; or this man shall be that man's heir, and this other man the heir of some one else whose thread is the shorter. See, a man is being elevated by his thread above the others. In a brief time his thread will break and he will fall to the ground with much noise; while another, who has been raised just above the ground, will fall so gently that his neighbours will not be aware of his mishap.

Charon. Ridiculous!

Mercury. Ridiculous, in truth, their insensate pursuit of trifles, and their disappointment, in the midst of their hopes, when Death calls them away. As you see, he has many agents busy among them, Agues, Fevers, Consumptions, Swords, Robberies, Hemlock, Judges and Tyrants. . . . Did they but bear in mind that they are mortal, and that after a short sojourn in life they must depart, as from a dream, leaving behind their all, they would live with more prudence and die with less regret. . . . How would a man bear himself, were he told by the Fates that he was never to dine in the house he is building; that no sooner shall the roof be put upon it than he shall be summoned to his grave, leaving his heir to enjoy the house? A man yonder has called his friends together, and is rejoicing because his wife has brought forth a male child. How deeply would he be affected to learn that the child shall die at the age of seven? Why would he be so troubled? Because his attention has been so fixed upon his fortunate friend whose son has just been proclaimed a victor at the Olympic Games, that he has not cast a glance upon the neighbour who is carrying *his* son to the grave.

Charon. What pleasure can they find in such a life ; what loss do they suffer from death that makes them so unwilling to die ? . . . They are but bubbles on a stream. Some are small, burst almost immediately, and disappear ; while others, inflated with a little more breath, float further on ere they perish.¹ . . . Before we descend let me see the repositories of the corpses.

Mercury. Those mounds before the cities, marked by columns and pyramids, are the receptacles of the corpses.

Charon. But why do they crown these stones ?

Mercury. I know not.

Charon. Vain mortals ! 'The tombless man and he who hath obtained a tomb are gone alike to the realms below. Irus the beggar and King Agamemnon dwell there in equal honour : the beautiful son of Thetis is indistinguishable from the hideous Thersites. Naked and forlorn, they wander sadly through the fields of asphodel.' . . . But let me see, ere we part, some of the great cities I have heard of below.

Mercury. Nineveh has been destroyed and no vestige of it remains. There is Babylon, with its towers and great walls ; yet it, too, must fall, and after no long time will be sought for in vain. Mycenæ, Cleonæ, and, above all, Ilium I am almost afraid to show you, lest you may throttle Homer on your return to the Shades for the bombast of his verses. These cities were once prosperous, but they are now *dead* : cities, like men, can die. And rivers, too : not even the channel of the Inachus is still left in Argos.²

¹ How little do we know that which we are !

How less what we may be ! The eternal surge
Of time and tide rolls on, and bears afar
Our bubbles ; as the old burst, new emerge,
Lash'd from the foam of ages ; while the graves
Of empires heave but like some passing waves.

Don Juan, xv. 99.

² 'At present the Sarasvati is so small a river that the epithets applied to it in the Veda have become quite inapplicable.'—Sir Max Müller's *Vedic Hymns*, p. 60.

Charon. Who are those men fighting there, and why do they kill one another?

Mercury. They are Argives and Spartans, and the dying general who inscribes the trophy with his own blood is Othryades.

Charon. What is the cause of the war?

Mercury. The very plain they are fighting on.

Charon. Blind folly! Were either army to gain the whole Peloponnesus, not one of the victors would receive another foot of ground from Æacus. Ere long, others will be tilling the plain, and the plough will tear up the trophy from its foundations. . . . Strange are the affairs of men,—Kings, gold, sacrifices, battles; but of Charon—not a word.

One thing seems to be quite certain: there was no tincture of theopathy in Lucian's nature. Wordsworth's lines would have conveyed no meaning to him:—

Oh! there is life that breathes not; Powers there are
That touch each other to the quick in modes
Which the gross world no sense hath to perceive,
No soul to dream of. . . .¹

It is comparatively easy to give the reader a rough representation of Lucian's meaning when treating on Art and man's life and destiny; but, most unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to give any one unacquainted with Greek a clear and adequate notion of his great wit and humour. The reasons are not hard to find.

¹ *Kilchurn Castle.*

First, it is impossible to translate a humourist into any foreign language without doing him grievous hurt. For example, take the German translation of 'Pickwick,' to which (I believe) two Germans and an Englishman devoted their best energies for a considerable time. It is a meritorious translation, but no Englishman can read it without feeling that (of necessity) much humour has been lost. All English translations of Molière and Cervantes labour under the same necessary defect.

Secondly, there is a difficulty which will be best explained by an example. Read Sydney Smith's 'Plymley Letters,' and then read the extracts from them given in the 'Wit and Wisdom of Sydney Smith.' The words in both cases are the same, but the effect produced is very different. Why is this? Because in the latter work Sydney Smith's witticisms and humours and drolleries have been torn from their original setting. The cunning jeweller knows best how to set his gems. Buy an emerald brooch, and then remove the stone from its setting. The stone remains the same, but it will be found to have lost something of its brilliancy and beauty.

Having explained the difficulties that lie in

the way, I shall endeavour to give some faint notion of Lucian's wit and humour.

After two or three ordinary sentences, we often meet with a sally of humour which seems all the brighter for its plain 'setting.'

'Where have they buried you?' asks Diogenes of Alexander the Great, on his arrival in the Shades. 'Nowhere, as yet,' replies the disconsolate monarch. 'This is the third day that I am lying in state in Babylon.'¹

He exposes the habitual miscarriage of justice in the Athenian law-courts in one short but admirable sentence. Justice is ordered by Jupiter to descend to Athens, accompanied by Mercury, to decide certain cases. On the way down her movements are so erratic that Mercury at length exclaims:—'why, you seem to have forgotten the way!'²

His brief description of Truth in 'Piscator' is very fine. Philosophy points out to him Temperance and Justice, and adds:—'yonder colourless and almost imperceptible form is Truth.' 'I do not see her,' replies Lucian. 'Do you not see her there, naked and unadorned, shrinking back and seemingly trying to elude us?' answers Philosophy.³

¹ *Dial. Mort.* 13.

² *Bis Accus.* 8.

³ *Pisc.* 16.

The leading philosophers in 'Piscator' declare that they will lay their charges against Lucian before Philosophy herself. 'Do so, by all means,' replies Lucian; 'but where are you to find her? I know not where she lives: I have searched for her house long and vainly. Meeting with many cloaked and bearded persons—your own followers—who declared they had just come from her, I begged them to direct me to her house; but while some of them returned me no answer at all, others pointed out, some one, some another door.'¹ Lucian's failure to find Philosophy among the philosophers calls to mind the failure of the archangel Michael to find Silence among the monks. 'I shall certainly find her,' said the angel to himself, as he descended in great haste from Heaven: 'I shall certainly find her

In these deep solitudes and awful cells,
Where heav'nly-pensive contemplation dwells,
And ever-musing melancholy reigns,—

in the monasteries. Is not her name inscribed in their choirs, their dormitories, their refectories? Yes, she must be there!' But no sooner had he put foot in the cloisters than he

¹ *Pisc.* 11.

found he was mistaken. She was not there, although her name was still on the door. She *had* lived there, but that was in years long past :

Ma dalla opinion sua ritrovosse
 Tosto ingannato, che nel chiostro venne :
 Non è Silenzio quivi ; e gli fu ditto
 Che non v' abita più, fuorchè in iscritto.

 Ben vi fur già, ma nell' antiqua etade.¹

The sudden exposure of men's private affairs may be disastrous to the reputation of even the pious. A Cynic in 'Piscator,' fearing to undergo cross-examination before Philosophy, Virtue and Truth, flies in such confusion that he leaves his bag behind him. 'Open it,' says Philosophy : 'the Cynics mortify the flesh, and you will only find a few beans and black bread, or perhaps a book.' 'Not at all,' says Parrhesiades, producing the contents ;—'gold, perfume, a sacrificial knife, a looking-glass, and—dice !'² An excellent chaplain of Newgate was once much in the same case. He was seated in a cart imparting the consolations of the Gospel to Jonathan Wild who, amid the execrations of the populace, was being conveyed to Tyburn to be hanged. But Wild's mind was not fixed on things above : he was pining for a last

¹ Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, xiv. 80-1.

² 45.

opportunity of exercising an art of which he was master. The chaplain's attention being for the moment occupied in the performance of his last office, Wild could not resist the temptation : in the midst of a shower of oaths and stones, 'he applied his hand to the parson's pocket and emptied it of his bottle-screw, which he carried out of the world in his hand.'¹

Aristenetus gives a dinner to a few friends at Athens and omits to invite a neighbouring philosopher, one Etœmocles. In the middle of the dinner a letter arrives from the sage, of which the following is an extract :—

Etœmocles the philosopher to Aristenetus, greeting !

My past life bears witness to the contempt I entertain for dinners. Overwhelmed as I am daily by invitations from persons wealthier than you, I have *never*, on principle, yielded to their importunity ; knowing that these dinners give rise generally to riot and inebriety. But this fact does not lessen the mortification I feel at your omission to invite me to-day, notwithstanding the assiduous court I have ever paid you. But in truth I am more grieved on your account than on my own,—grieved to find you have so ungrateful a heart. I am not a man whose happiness depends on a plate of wild boar or hare or pastry : I am supplied with these good things, even to satiety, by persons of birth and breeding. As proof of what I say, I may mention that, although bidden to-day by my disciple Pamenes to a feast (which they tell me was sumptuous), I refused the invitation and foolishly reserved myself *for you*. You cannot say that you forgot me in the hurry of the preparations for your dinner, for I twice

¹ Fielding's *Jonathan Wild*.

addressed you personally this very day: once, not many paces from your own door, and again in the Temple of the Dioscuri, where you were offering sacrifice. In case it may occur to you to send me by my servant a slice of wild-boar, venison or pastry (as some compensation for the dinner I have lost), let me say that I have strictly forbidden him to be the bearer of any such gift, lest you might suspect I had sent him with so mean an object.¹

If this letter afford us any amusement, how much more amusement must it have afforded Lucian's contemporaries, who knew Etœmocles and his like?

Impelled by curiosity, says Lucian in the 'Veræ Historiæ,' I embarked at the Pillars of Hercules with fifty others in a stout ship, commanded by a skilful captain, with intent to make a voyage of discovery in the Western Ocean.

Things went well with us at first; but the second day out the wind increased, the sea got up, and so thick a darkness fell upon us that we could not see to strike our sails. We were tossed in this tempest for threescore and nineteen days. On the fourthscore day the sun broke out, and we descried not far off a mountainous island covered with forest. Here we put in, full of misery, and threw ourselves upon the ground to rest. When sufficiently refreshed, a party of us went to discover the island, and presently we lighted upon a brazen pillar on which was engraven in much-worn Greek letters:—'Thus far Hercules and Bacchus.' Near the pillar we saw two foot-prints in the rock, one about one hundred feet long, the other less; and we came to the conclusion that the lesser was that of Bacchus, the other that of Hercules.²

¹ *Convivium*, 22-7.

² Lucian is ridiculing Herodotus: 'the Scythians show the footprint of Hercules upon a rock, near the river Tyras, which is one yard in length': iv. 82.

After prostrating ourselves before them, we proceeded onward and presently came across a river of wine in no way inferior to Chian. The river originated in a vast forest of vines, which distilled wine from their roots. It was well stored with fish, but all those who ate them became quite drunk. On opening the fish to discover the cause, we found they were full of lees. It was now quite clear to us all that, as the inscription stated, Bacchus had visited the place.

Passing onward we came upon a forest of vines with stout trunks, but the tops were women from the hips upwards, somewhat resembling the pictures one has seen of Daphne who was turned into a tree when overtaken by Apollo. . . . Next day we put to sea again with a gentle wind ; but about noon we were struck suddenly by a whirlwind which lifted the ship bodily out of the sea and raised it some thousands of yards into the air, where it continued to blow us along for seven days. On the eighth we succeeded in landing upon an island floating in the air, which, as we approached it, shone brightly in the sunlight.¹ The fields were cultivated, and on going inland we were received kindly by the inhabitants, Hippogypians or horse-vultures, as they are called. They are simply men who ride on vultures. These vultures have three heads, and are so large that each feather in their wings is longer and thicker than the mast of a ship. On being presented to the King, we found that he was the Greek, Endymion, who had been long since rapt up from the earth and made King of the country ; and that the country was no other than the Moon. We enquired about the cause of the war he was waging against Phaethon, King of the inhabitants of the Sun ; and he said it was occasioned by his attempting to colonise the Morning Star, which hitherto had been uninhabited and desolate. This had

¹ *Λαμπρὰν καὶ . . . φωτὶ μεγάλῳ καταλαμπομένην*, i. 10. Swift has borrowed this passage almost literally : ' the island appeared to be a firm substance . . . shining very bright, from the reflection of the sea below ' : *Voyage to Laputa*, chap. i.

excited Phaethon's envy, and hence the war. On his promising to provide us with vultures and arms, we volunteered to fight in the battle which was expected to take place the next day.

Our forces amounted to about 100,000, besides Engineers and foreign Allies. Among the latter were 30,000 Psyllo-toxotans from the Great Bear, each of whom rode a flea as big as a dozen elephants, and 50,000 Anemodromians, who flew through the air by means of long cloaks which acted much the same as wings. A large force was expected from the stars above Cappadocia, but whether they arrived or not I do not know. . . .

The right wing of our army was composed of Hippians, and was commanded by the King in person. The Lachanopters (who rode on a mighty fowl, with wings of lettuce leaves and wort leaves instead of feathers) formed the left wing, the Allies being in the centre. As the Moon abounds in spiders, each as large as one of the Cyclades, the King requested them to spin a web between the Moon and the Morning Star. They carried out his wishes at once, and thus afforded firm standing-ground for the Infantry, commanded by Nycterion. The left wing of the enemy consisted of 50,000 Hippomyrmicks, commanded by Phaethon himself. These soldiers ride upon large, winged brutes, which look like magnified emmets. The biggest occupy over an acre. Not only do they carry soldiers on their backs, but they themselves do much damage with their horns. Their right wing was formed of Aeroconopes, archers riding upon huge gnats, together with the Aerocardakes, who discharged turnips to a great distance from slings. Those hit by the turnips die from the stench of their wounds. Behind them were drawn up 50,000 Caulomycetes, with shields of mushrooms and spears of asparagus stalks. There were also Allies from the Dog Star in their ranks, Cynobalanians, dog-faced men mounted upon winged acorns. The auxiliaries from the Milky Way and the Nephelocentaurs arrived too late for the first encounter. . . . In this battle the Helians

or Sun-soldiers) were completely beaten by the Selenians (or Moon-soldiers), who forthwith proceeded to erect two trophies. But hardly had they done so than a cry was raised that the Nephelocentaurs (who had at length arrived) were upon them. These winged men joined to winged horses were a strange sight. The part that resembled mankind, which was from the waist upwards, was as large as the Colossus of Rhodes; while the part that was like a horse was as big as a ship of burden. This marvellous force was commanded by Sagittarius from the Zodiac. Finding on their arrival that the Helians had been defeated, they at once fell upon the Selenians, who were disordered by the pursuit and had scattered for plunder; put them to flight, pursued the King to his capital, and killed most of his vultures. But they did not besiege the capital. Far worse, they built a double wall of clouds to prevent the light of the Sun from shining upon the Moon, and thus plunged all things lunar in perpetual night. This was so serious an evil that Endymion sent ambassadors to sue for peace; and after some diplomacy, the following treaty was made:—

- 1^o. the Helians to remove the wall and deliver up the prisoners they have taken for a certain ransom;
- 2^o. the Selenians to respect the independence of other stars;
- 3^o. either of the contracting parties to assist the other if invaded;
- 4^o. the King of the Selenians to pay a tribute of 10,000 vessels of dew and to deliver 10,000 of his people as hostages;
- 5^o. the colony to the Morning Star to be supplied by both of the contracting parties;
- 6^o. the foregoing articles of peace to be engraved on amber pillars and set up in both states.

Signed on behalf of the Helians by
Pyronides,
Therites,
Phlogius.

Signed on behalf of the Selenians by

Nyctor,
Menius,
Polylampes.

Shortly after the signing of the treaty, I (Lucian) and my companions departed, notwithstanding the pressing invitation of Endymion to remain.

I may mention that when a lunar man is come to his full age, he does not die, but is dissolved like smoke and turns into air. For food, they inhale the steam that rises from broiling frogs; and for drink, they have air beaten in a mortar, which produces a moisture somewhat like dew. They have eyes which they can take in and out as they please. Many, when they have lost their own eyes, borrow those of others. . .

After many adventures we reached the aerial city of lights, Lychnopolis. Here not a man was to be seen, but only a great number of lamps running to and fro. . . . Their court of justice stands in the middle of the city, and the Governor sits there all night, on occasion calling every lamp by name. The lamp, or lantern, that answers not is adjudged to die as a deserter. Their death is, to be put out. . . .¹

The fourth day out from Lychnopolis we descended imperceptibly through the air, and to our inexpressible joy found ourselves once more upon the sea. Two days afterwards we came across some monstrous fish, and eventually a whale 170 miles long swallowed us up, ship and all. . . . Within him were earth and hills, with trees and all manner of herbs, and there were evident signs of cultivation. . . . Exploring a wood, we came across a temple dedicated to Neptune and several graves with pillars upon them. Eventually we heard the barking of a dog, and found an old Cypriote and his son engaged in gardening. Seven and twenty years had elapsed since they had been swallowed by

¹ Rabelais, who appropriated Lychnopolis, has strangely overlooked this fine stroke: *Pant.* v. chaps. xxxii. xxxiii.

the whale, and they would be willing enough to remain, they said, but for the perverse and troublesome character of their neighbours,—several different tribes, numbering in all about 1,000 men. For peace' sake, the old man said, he paid a yearly tribute of 500 oysters to the Psettopodians. On finding that these truculent people had no arms but the bones of fishes, we determined to raise a war by refusing to pay the tribute, which was then due. We gave a haughty and scornful answer to the messengers sent to demand it; and this led, as we had intended, to the outbreak of hostilities. In the battle which ensued we routed the Psettopodians, killing one hundred, three score and ten of them, while we ourselves lost but one man besides Trigles, our captain, who was run through with a fish's rib. . . . In a short time we subdued all the other tribes and made ourselves masters of the whole country. . . . After one year and eight months' imprisonment (which we calculated by observing that the whale opened his mouth once per hour), we grew weary and resolved to escape.¹ We hit upon the plan of burning the whale, and set fire to the parts towards his tail. The eighth and ninth days of the burning he grew sickly: on the twelfth he began to mortify, and we bethought ourselves that, unless we gagged him, his mouth might close for ever, and we should perish miserably in his dead body. This we succeeded in doing; the next day the whale died; and, drawing our ship through his mouth, we found ourselves once more upon the open sea. Before leaving the carcase, however, we mounted upon its back and sacrificed to Neptune for three days. . . . After many days' voyage we approached a spacious island, and entered into a fragrant atmosphere of sweet and delicate smell.² Here we found rivers of clear water flowing quietly, with meadows and herbs and birds, some singing upon the sea-shore, some among the branches

¹ I have been obliged to omit the battle between the inhabitants of the floating islands, from considerations of space.

² Ἀπόζει δὲ τῆς χώρας τῆς Ἀραβίης θεσπέσιον ὡς ἡδύ: Herodotus, iii. 113.

of the trees, while a light and agreeable air compassed the whole country. When the gentle breezes stirred the woods, the motion of the branches made a continual delightful music, like the sound of wind instruments in a solitary place.¹ . . . Eventually we landed and meeting with the guards, who told us that this was the Isle of the Blest, we were bound with garlands of roses and brought before the Governor, Rhadamanthus. . . . After hearing our story, he said that we should have to account after death for gadding about and prying into everything,² but that we would be permitted to rest ourselves in Elysium for seven months. Our garlands then fell from us and we were set at liberty. The city was all golden, with a wall of the precious stone smaragdus,³ in which were seven gates of cinnamon wood. The paths and roads were of ivory; the temples were of beryl, and the altars within them were made of one whole amethyst each. . . . The only garments of the Blest are cobwebs of a purple colour. . . . No one grows old, but remains ever the same age as when he arrived there. There is no night, nor yet clear day: the light is like the earthly twilight towards morning, before the sun is up. They have but one season, spring, and one wind, Zephyrus. The island brings forth all kinds of flowers and shady plants. They feast without the city in a meadow called Elysium, which is environed with woods. The guests sit upon beds of flowers in the cool shade, and everything they may desire is brought to them by the wind, except wine. There are trees around whose fruits are wine goblets, which become full of wine on being plucked. During the feast, the nightingales gather flowers from the surrounding fields, and, flying around, scatter them

¹ And now 'twas like all instruments,
 Now like a lonely flute;
 And now it is an angel's song,
 That makes the heavens be mute.

The Ancient Mariner.

² This sarcasm is aimed at Herodotus.

³ And the building of the wall was of jasper, and the city was pure gold.—*Revelation*, xxi. 18.

among the company. . . . After dinner they spend the time in music and singing and reciting poetry, generally Homer. . . . They have two perpetual sources of mirth,—wells, the one the Well of Pleasure, the other the Well of Laughter; and each one of them drinks of either well before sitting down to eat. . . . We saw all the Seven Wise Men there, except Periander. There, too, was Socrates conversing with Nestor and Palamedes. . . . Of the philosophers, Plato alone was absent. He dwelt apart (they said) in a Republic which he had formed himself and governed by his own laws. Aristippus and Epicurus were invited everywhere owing to their geniality, and Diogenes was so completely changed that he had actually got married. Occasionally he drank far more than was good for him. Not a single Stoic could we find. They were still engaged in the ascent of the Hill of Virtue, and had not yet reached the top. The New Academicians (we were told) were willing enough to come, but they were still *hesitating and enquiring*;¹ for they were unable to *perceive clearly*² whether the Isle of the Blest really existed or not. They had their doubts too as to how Rhadamanthus would judge them, they themselves having abolished the *means of forming a judgment* upon any question.³ . . . After a few days I got speech of Homer, and asked him what countryman he was. He said he was a Babylonian⁴ and his real name Tigranes. I begged him to say whether those verses now supposed on earth to be spurious were his or not; and he told me plainly they were all his own, and condemned the critics Zenodotus and Aristarchus and their school for their frigid criticisms.⁵ He

¹ ἐπέχειν ἔτι καὶ διασκέπτεσθαι, ii. 18.

καταλαμβάνειν: ἰδ.

³ κριτήριον: ἰδ.

⁴ When asked by Fielding where he was born, Homer said, 'upon my soul, I cannot tell': *Journey from this World to the Next*, p. 19.

⁵ 'I proposed,' says Swift, 'that Homer and Aristotle might appear at the head of all their commentators; but these were so numerous, that some hundreds were forced to attend in the court and outward rooms of the palace Homer was the taller and comelier person of the two, walked very erect for one of his age, and

said that the mention of 'anger' in the first line of the 'Iliad' was purely accidental, and that the 'Iliad' was written before the 'Odyssey.' Many other questions he answered quite frankly, and he discoursed freely upon the charges of abusing and scoffing at Thersites, which the latter had laid against him before Rhadamanthus. Ulysses acted as advocate for Homer, and the grand old poet was acquitted. . . . While we were there, the games of the Blest, or Thanatusia, came off. I cannot remember all the details, but I do remember that, although Homer's verses were indisputably the best, Hesiod won the prize for poetry. Hardly were the games ended when news was brought that the condemned in Tartarus had broken loose and were in full sail for the Isle of the Blest, under the command of Phalaris of Agrigentum. Rhadamanthus immediately drew up the Heroes in battle array, and they defeated the mutineers with much loss when they landed. They were sent back to Tartarus to be punished with greater torments. . . . Before leaving Elysium, I entreated Homer to write an epigram for me. He made me the following, which I had engraved on a column of beryl near the haven :

Here Lucian, heaven's favourite, used to roam ;
Saw what was to be seen ; and then went home.

his eyes were the most quick and piercing I ever beheld. Aristotle stooped much, and made use of a staff I soon discovered that both of them were perfect strangers to the rest of the company, and had never seen or heard of them before ; and I had a whisper from a ghost, who shall be nameless, "that these commentators always kept in the most distant quarters from their principals in the lower world, through a consciousness of shame and guilt, because they had so horribly misrepresented the meaning of those authors to posterity." I introduced Didymus and Eustathius to Homer, and prevailed on him to treat them better than perhaps they deserved, for he soon found they wanted a genius to enter into the spirit of a poet. But Aristotle was out of all patience with the account I gave him of Scotus and Ramus, as I presented them to him ; and he asked them "whether the rest of the tribe were as great dunces as themselves ?" — *Voyage to Laputa*, chap. viii.

As we were embarking, Ulysses gave me a letter (unknown to Penelope) and begged me to deliver it to Calypso in Ogygia. . . . We had not long passed beyond the divine fragrance of Elysium, when a smell of burning brimstone became perceptible. The sky was darkened; the lashing of whips was heard, and lamentable voices: we were nearing the Isles of the Impious, or Tartarus.¹ . . . We visited but one of these islands, which was formed of pointed rocks, without wood or water,—a howling wilderness. There were, it is true, three rivers; but one consisted of filth, the second of blood, and the third of fire, broad and impassable, which flowed on like water and rolled in billows of flame. There was but one narrow entrance to the harbour, guarded by Timon of Athens. . . . Shortly afterwards we reached the Isle of Dreams, a dim and indistinct land, itself almost a dream; for it seemed to recede and fly from us as we endeavoured to make it. Reaching it at length, we found it was encircled by a wood of exceedingly tall poppies and mandragoras, in which nestled a great number of owls. The walls of its capital are of a changeable colour, somewhat like the rainbow. . . . As we entered one of its four gates we saw the temple of Night on the right hand and the temple of Sleep on the left. In the market-place we found the temples of Falsehood and Truth. Some of the dreams who inhabit the city are long, beautiful and pleasing; others short and disquieting. Many of them were old friends, who saluted us and feasted us nobly. Some of them took us home to our own country to see our friends, and brought us back the next day. We spent thirty days there, feasting and sleeping, until we were all suddenly awakened by a clap of thunder; on which we hurriedly put to sea again, and reached Ogygia the third day out. On the way I read Ulysses' letter to Calypso, which ran as follows:

'Ulysses to Calypso, greeting!

This is to tell you that on leaving you I was shipwrecked

¹ There seems to be some *lacuna* or corruption here in the original.

and only escaped with my life. After many wanderings I reached Ithaca, to find my wife, Penelope, surrounded by wooers, living riotously at my expense. Them I killed, but was at length put to death by my own son Telegonus. I am now in the Isle of the Blest where I repent daily that I ever left you and refused the immortality you offered me. When an opportunity occurs, I shall certainly slip away from here and come back to you.'

Not long after landing we happened to come across Calypso sitting in a cave, busy with her wool. On reading the letter, which I handed to her, she wept and was much troubled; but presently she recovered herself, and treated us most hospitably. She asked many questions about Ulysses, and enquired whether Penelope was really as beautiful and modest as Ulysses had always represented her to be. . . .

The foregoing extracts from Lucian's works may suffice to show that he was superior to Horace, Persius, Juvenal and Voltaire in imagination, and that (without making invidious comparisons) he must be classed, as regards this faculty, with Rabelais and Swift. In pure irony he must yield the palm to Swift and Voltaire. We occasionally—indeed too often—see the smile playing round Lucian's face in his ironic passages, and this smile is fatal to irony in its perfection. There is not the trace of a smile in Swift's 'Modest Proposal,' in 'Gulliver,' or in the most laughable of his works perhaps, the 'Partridge' letters.¹ Nor is there the shadow

¹ *Predictions for the year 1708, by I. Bickerstaff, Esqre.*

of a smile in Voltaire's 'Candide.' As to wit and humour, it is scarcely possible to speak positively. What amuses one man may not amuse another; one age may read without a smile what another age laughs at. In the humble opinion of the present writer, Lucian never wrote anything so delightfully ludicrous as the 'Partridge' letters; but Lucian's contemporaries, could they have read Swift, might not have ratified this judgment.

The wild luxuriance and lavish prodigality of imagery displayed in the 'Veræ Historiæ,' and elsewhere, are not astonishing when we reflect that Lucian was a western Asiatic. He possessed the imagination of his race, the imagination of Firdousi's 'Shahnama' and the 'Arabian Nights;' of Job, Isaiah and the Apocalypse.



APPENDIX

LUCIAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF LATIN

LUCIAN openly quotes the 'Odyssey' several times in the 'Necyomantia,' but he makes use of it at least six times without acknowledgment :

- | | | | |
|----|--------|--|---------------|
| 1. | Homer | Ὡς αἱ τετριγυῖαι ἄμ' ἦϊσαν | Od. xxiv. 9 |
| | Lucian | Σκιαὶ τετριγυῖαι | Nec. 11 |
| 2. | Homer | Ulysses reaches the land and city of the Cimmerians : | |
| | | Ἡέρι καὶ νεφέλῃ κεκαλυμμένοι· οὐδὲ ποτ' αὐτοὺς Ἡέλιος φαέθων καταδέρκεται ἀκτίνεσσιν, | |
| | Lucian | Ἄλλ' ἐπὶ νύξ' ὀλοή τέταται δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσιν Menippus reaches a similar place : | Od. xi. 14-19 |
| | | Ἄφικνούμεθα ἔς τι χωρίον ἔρημον καὶ ὕλωδες καὶ ἀνήλιον | Nec. 9 |
| 3. | Homer | Βόθρον ὄρυξ' | Od. xi. 25 |
| | Lucian | Βόθρον τέ ὠρυξάμεθα | Nec. 9 |
| 4. | Homer | Ulysses was surrounded by the ghosts of wounded warriors : | |
| | Lucian | Πολλοὶ δ' οὐτάμενοι χαλκήρεσιν ἐγχείησιν Menippus meets similar ghosts : | Od. xi. 40 |
| | | Τραυματῖαι δὲ πάντες ἐπέπλεον ἔκ τινος πολέμου παρόντες | Nec. 11 |
| 5. | Homer | Καὶ Τιτυὸν εἶδον, Γαίης ἐρικυδέος υἱὸν, Κείμενον ἐν δαπέδῳ· ὁ δ' ἐπ' ἐννέα κεῖτο πέλεθρα | Od. xi. 576-7 |
| | Lucian | Εἶδον . . . τὸν γηγενῆ Τιτυὸν· . . . ἔκειτο γούν τόπον ἐπέχων ἀγροῦ | Nec. 14 |
| 6. | Homer | Καὶ μὴν Τάνταλον εἰσείδον χαλέπ' ἄλγέ' ἔχοντα | Od. xi. 582 |
| | Lucian | Εἶδον . . . τὸν Φρύγα Τάνταλον χαλεπῶς ἔχοντα | Nec. 14. |

Seeing that Lucian appropriated so freely the thoughts and phrases of a Greek poet without making an acknowledgment, it would be in no way surprising if he treated the Latin writers which he had looked into himself, or which had been translated to him by his friends, in a similar manner. The question is, did he in fact do so?

Love of fame, 'the last infirmity of noble mind,' no doubt gave rise to sayings substantially the same in all ages of the world; yet there seems to be an echo of Tacitus in a remark Lucian makes on the subject:

*Etiam sapientibus cupido gloriæ novissima exiit;*¹

Τὸ φιλόδοξον οἶόν τί ἐστὶν ἀναλογιζόμενος, ὡς μόνος οὗτος ὁ ἔρωσ ἀφυκτος καὶ τοῖς πάνυ θαναματοῖς εἶναι δοκοῦσιν.²

The quaint notion of the dead being accused before Minos by their own shadows may have been suggested to Lucian by the remark of Lucretius that 'our shadows mimic our gestures'; the implication being that they are acquainted with our every act.

*Umbra videtur item nobis in sole moveri,
Et vestigia nostra sequi, gestumque imitari.*

*Propterea fit, uti videatur, quæ fuit umbra
Corporis, e regione eadem nos usque sequuta;*³

Μενίρρῆς: Οἴσθᾳ που ταυτασὶ τὰς πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον ἀποτελουμένας σκιὰς ἀπὸ τῶν σωμάτων;

Philonides: Πάνυ μὲν οὖν.

Μενίρρῆς: Αὐταί τοίνυν, ἐπειδὴν ἀποθάνωμεν, κατηγοροῦσὶ τε καὶ καταμαρτυροῦσὶ καὶ διελέγχουσι τὰ πεπραγμένα ἡμῶν παρὰ τὸν βίον, καὶ σφόδρα τινὲς ἀξιόπιστοι δοκοῦσιν ἅτε αἰεὶ ξυνοῦσαι καὶ μηδέποτε ἀφιστάμεναι τῶν σωμάτων.⁴

Lucian has given us an account of the abduction of Europa in which there is not a phrase that reminds one of

¹ *Hist.* iv. 6.

² *Pereg.* 38.

³ iv. 365-75.

⁴ *Necyom.* 11:

Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
The fatal shadows that walk by us still.

J. FLETCHER.

the Idyll of Moschus on the same subject, which he might well have known; yet he makes use of one expression which immediately recalls Ovid. 'With her right hand,' says Ovid, 'she held the bull's horn:'

. . . . lævâ retinebat amictus,
 Aura sinus implet¹

In Lucian's account: τῆ ἐτέρα (χειρὶ) δὲ ἠνεμωμένον τὸν πέπλον ξυνείχεν.²

It is incredible that Lucian could have ever seen the 'Thoughts of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius.' May he not have borrowed the phrase

ζῆν δὲ αἰὲ τὸν θάνατον πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν ἔχοντας,³

which it is difficult to believe was his own, from Horace?—

Omnem crede diem tibi diluxisse supremum.⁴

The reminiscences of Vergil in the 'Necyomantia' are numerous and striking.

(a) The reader may be reminded that Ulysses (in Homer) reached the spot where he was visited by the shades of the dead, without any guide. On his asking Circe who was to guide him, she replied: 'have no care about that matter.'⁵ On the other hand, Æneas was led by the Cumæan Sibyl and Menippus by the Persian magician, Mithrobarzanes, and they both kept close to their conductors:

Ille ducem haud timidis vadentem passibus æquat Æn. vi. 263
 Προῆει μὲν ὁ Μιθροβαρζάνης, εἰπόμεν δ' ἐγὼ κατόπιν
 ἐχόμενος αὐτοῦ Nec. 11

(b) In the preparatory magic rites, the Sibyl and the sage uttered unearthly sounds:

Nec mortale sonans . . . Æn. vi. 50
 Ἄσαφές ἐφθέγγετο . . . Nec. 7

¹ *Fasti*, v. 605.

² *Dial. Mar.* 15.

³ *Contemplan.* 20.

⁴ *Ep.* i. 4, 13.

⁵ *Od.* x. 505.

(c) Towards the close of the magic rites, both Sibyl and sage became excited and shouted :

| | | |
|---|------------------|------------|
| | Sibylla | |
| | antroque remugit | Æn. vi. 99 |
| 'Ο δὲ μάγος . . . οὐκέτ' ἡρεμαία τῆ φωνῆ . . . ἐπεβοᾶτο | | Nec. 9 |

(d) The magic rites produced almost exactly the same effects in both cases :

| | |
|--|-------------|
| . Ecce autem | |
| Sub pedibus mugire solum, et juga cœpta moveri | |
| Silvarum, visæque canes ululare per umbram . . . | Æn. vi. 256 |
| Εὐθύς οὖν ἅπαντα ἐκείνα ἐσαλεύετο καὶ ὑπὸ τῆς ἐπωδῆς | |
| τοῦδαφος ἀνερρήγνυτο καὶ ἡ ὕλακὴ τοῦ Κερβέρου | |
| καὶ πόρρωθεν ἠκούετο | Nec. 10 |

(e) In Vergil, Charon's objections to receive a mortal in his boat are answered by showing him the Golden Bough Æn. vi. 405

In Lucian, Charon is deceived by the lion's skin of Hercules which Menippus wore Nec. 10

(f) The Sibyl stupefies Cerberus with cake of honey and medicated grain Æn. vi. 419

| | |
|---|---------|
| Menippus lulls him by the sound of his lyre : | |
| ταχὺ δέ μου κρούσαντος τὴν λύραν παραχρῆμα ἐκλήθη | |
| ὑπὸ τοῦ μέλους | Nec. 10 |

When Alcæus struck his golden harp, Horace describes Cerberus as

| | | |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| | illis carminibus stupens ¹ | Car. ii. 13 |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|-------------|

(g) The sounds of woe heard from the prisons in Tartarus are described in almost identical language by Vergil and Lucian :

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Hinc exaudiri gemitus, et sæva sonare | |
| Verbera : tum stridor ferri, tractæque catenæ . . . | Æn. vi. 558 |

¹ Schoell thinks it probable that Horace was not unknown to Lucian — 'vielleicht nicht unbekannt': *Gesch. der griechischen Literatur*, Berlin, 1830, ii. 478. He gives no reason for thinking so.

Πολλὰ καὶ ἔλεινὰ ἦν καὶ ἀκούσαι καὶ ἰδεῖν· μαστίγων
 τε γὰρ ὁμοῦ ψόφος ἠκούετο . . . καὶ στρέβλαι καὶ
 κύφωνες καὶ τροχοί Nec. 14

The foregoing similarities of thought and language *may* be all purely accidental. In particular, the striking resemblance between the 'Æneid' and the 'Necyomantia' *may* be due to Vergil and Lucian having borrowed from some common and unknown source. As the matter stands, however, the collective weight of the parallel passages seems to raise a probability that Lucian had some knowledge of Latin literature.

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